

The Secret of the Swamp

A condensation from

ANDERSONVILLE

by MACKINLAY KANTOR



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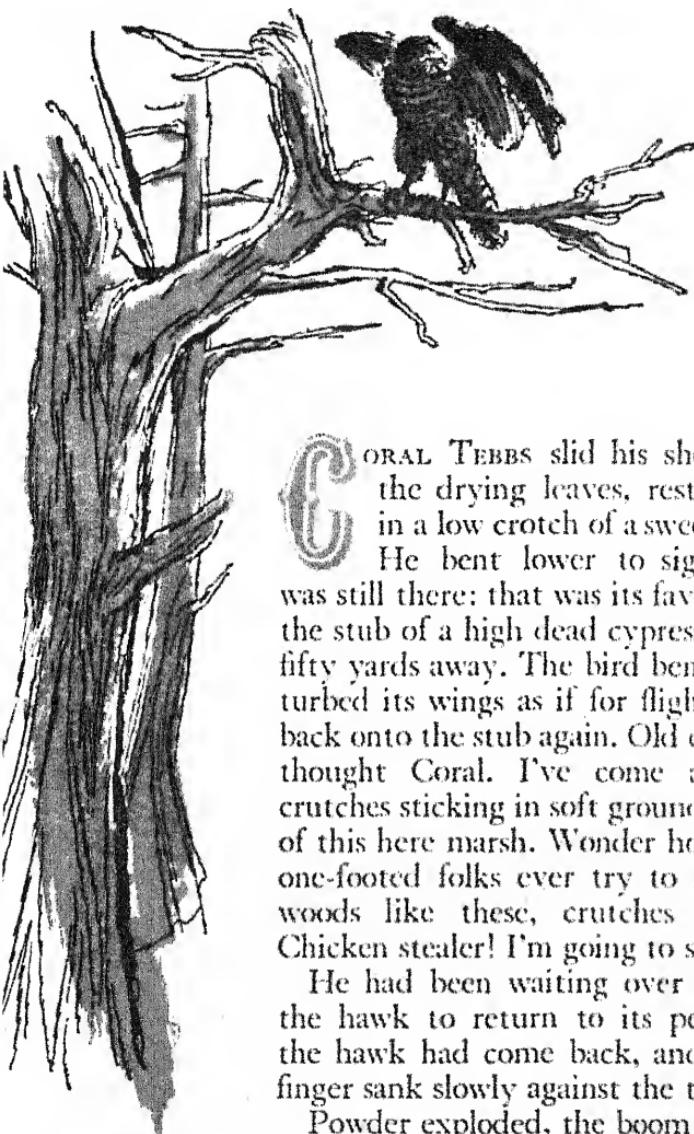
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Far from the battlefield at Gettysburg, two veterans of that bloody engagement meet in a Georgia swamp: Naz Stricker, a young Pennsylvanian escaped from Andersonville, the infamous Confederate prison; Coral Tebbs, maimed and bitter toward all Yankees. Their confrontation, and the drama that unfolds, is a moving affirmation of the instinct for brotherhood that transcends the hate and horror of war.





CORAL TEBBS slid his shotgun through the drying leaves, resting its weight in a low crotch of a sweet-gum sapling. He bent lower to sight. The hawk was still there; that was its favorite perch, on the stub of a high dead cypress branch about fifty yards away. The bird bent forward, disturbed its wings as if for flight, then folded back onto the stub again. Old chicken stealer, thought Coral. I've come a weary way, crutches sticking in soft ground long the edge of this here marsh. Wonder how many other one-footed folks ever try to leg it through woods like these, crutches and all? . . . Chicken stealer! I'm going to spoil your guts.

He had been waiting over two hours for the hawk to return to its perch, and now the hawk had come back, and Coral's bony finger sank slowly against the trigger.

Powder exploded, the boom hurt, the butt crunched into the youth's shoulder. A dust — feathers? — blew loose from the bird. The hawk went forward into space, wings half lifted again, but wings bent under.

Got you, you no-good thief, cried Coral in his heart with hate like glee. That's a right heavy animal, he thought, as he heard the body go plunging through cypress twigs and heard stringy streamers of moss ripped loose and saw them waving. Then came a light damp mingled thud and splash as the hawk landed at the edge of some shallow pool which Coral could not see.

He put his dark brows together and rubbed his hairy chin with a speculative hand. Well, now. Hawk must be a hundred and fifty foot over yonder and all sorts of brush and vines in between.

But damn if he wasn't going to get that hawk, if he had to crawl to do it. He'd have a sorry time, hoisting his crutches and wriggling his one sound limb over all those logs and tangles, but he meant to take that hawk home. Tote it all the way home, and maybe his mother would like to have a couple nice big hawk-wing fans for next summer instead of the regular turkey-wing fans that most folks had. Tote it home, dump it down on the stoop and say, Here's one robber ain't going to make off with no more of our fries. Cripple or no cripple!

Coral took a bearing on the hawk's vacant perch, perceiving where the area directly beneath it must lie in the thicket ahead. Tough work, a-crawling and a-climbing, and he'd have to leave the shotgun right here. Coral reloaded the gun and hung it in a tree. Then he hitched his way along the damp cypress log and pushed through a layer of vines, looking back constantly to keep to the beeline he had established. He fell when his crutches caught on a root, and he swore at root, crutches, swamp, hawk, the winter sun overhead; he swore at his own clumsiness, at the Yankees who'd riddled his foot at Gettysburg the year before, at the surgeons who had cut it off and sent him home a cripple. He went on, breathing heavily; and from ahead sounded a faint plashing as if some wild animal were molested by his approach. Oh, why hadn't he toted that gun along, somehow or other? Here he might meet up with something else to shoot, and he would have no gun, and —

At last he panted beneath the half-dead cypress. Surely this was the place — it was open, a small glade higher and drier than the surrounding thickets, like an island — yet no hawk could be seen. Yes, yes, here were white spatters of dung on some sodden

old cypress knees; this was the place, it had to be. But no hawk.

Then, immediately before his gaze, Coral Tebbs saw footprints in the mold, and those footprints were filling slowly with water.

All right, damn it, he heard in a strange strained churlish voice; it was fearful to recognize that voice as his own. He'd just passed a tupelo tree, and now he found himself backing against that tree, small as it was. All right, he said again to the gloom. Got a knife here. Come out them bushes, mister.

Sprouts and vines and moss were motionless, then they twitched, then the twitching died and they were motionless again.

Telling you for the last time, come out them bushes.

A figure arose to confront him. It was such a spook as might have sent any field Negro of the region scuttling. It was a spook somewhat smaller than Coral Tebbs, nearly beardless, with a crusted pitch-blackened skull for a face, and dressed in scarecrow shreds of flannel and jeans. Coral could not immediately recognize this starveling for what the thing really was. True, he had lurked to watch the wagonloads of bodies go past from nearby Andersonville, where upwards of thirty thousand Yankee prisoners were herded behind a stockade on nineteen or twenty acres of open, marshy ground; but usually the dead were naked.

That's my hawk you got in your hand, said Coral.

Sure enough. The creature had the hawk, and the hawk hung limp-winged and bloody.

What you doing with my hawk?

The figure tumbled loosely out of the vines and went down among twisting knees of the swamp; it was half a sitting down, half a falling down. The thing wore a moldy cap with a corroded clover leaf on the top of it; you could see that the clover leaf had once been red, but the visor of the cap was gone. The thing still held the hawk.

What was you going to do with my bird, you?

Faint weak voice whispered, Eat it.

Well, said Coral Tebbs, damn if you hain't a Yankee got loose from that pen over yonder! Well, I'm going to turn you in.

Go ahead.

Reckon I'll get a reward, too. You got ary weapon about you?

Naw.

What might be your name? You are a measly rat for certain.
Name's Stricker.

What?

Naz Stricker.

What?

Nazareth Stricker.

Where you from?

Hundred and Forty-Eighth Pennsylvania.

You mean to say you damn Yankees'll eat a hawk? Hawk ain't fit.

I'd eat anything, said Naz Stricker.

I did hear them trail-dogs in the night. Never did hear the catch-dogs a-barking. Reckon twas you they was after.

The Yankee swayed, seemed about to fall flat, then caught himself and remained in a hunched sitting position.

Coral Tibbs swung his crutches and his leg, moving closer. What's that red dingus on your cap, you?

I don't know.

You don't know? Guess you damn Yankees don't know nothing. Worse'n a pack of niggers.

Yes . . . do know. It's -- clover leaf. That means Second Corps. Red because we were First Division of the Second Corps. . . .

What division was that?

Naz Stricker considered dreamily. The battle was a long time ago, a lifetime ago. Caldwell's, he said.

When Coral lay on old dry blood-blackened straw in a wagon, while a column of wounded pitched and screamed and muddled up and down the racking Maryland hills, he had seen prisoners marching alongside, unwounded ones. At Andersonville he had, many times, watched ranks of fresh prisoners being formed into squads while little German-born Captain Wirz, the camp commandant, danced and mouthed at them. Thus he had seen many Yankees close at hand. He had felt the venom fly from his own eyes; it was as if the Yankees must feel it also, spraying over their skin and burning as it sprayed. Put the swine in the pen; let them stink; let them yell; shoot the first who comes nigh the deadline. If he'd received a

lighter wound with no amputation resulting --- Oh, he'd learned that there were plenty of them, wounded Confederate veterans who were considered unfit for further duty in the field; yet they had been accepted to help fill up new ranks of the Georgia Reserves. They were guarding Yanks, and a thousand times Coral Tebbs had wished that he might stand among the guards. Bet he'd show those blue-bellies who was boss . . . how he'd show them!

You going to come along of me.

The Yankee's eyes were shut.

Want I should bust your head with this here crutch?

Go ahead, came the whisper. Bust it.

Hold up your hands, you! So's I can see you hain't got a weapon.

The hawk slid into muck below the cypress knees. The ragamuffin's right hand came wavering up; the left hand came wavering up, except that there was no left hand. Nothing but a tattered sleeve and what appeared to be a grimy bone sticking out of tatters.

Coral made a sound. Oh, by God, his soul was saying, oh, by God, and yet he could not speak a word which sounded like a word.

The escaped prisoner's arms fell back beside him.

Yank. The harsh sound of the word hurt the throat of Coral Tebbs as if that throat were scraped by a dull knife. Yank, what you got there? What befell you? Your hand —

They — took it off. Right at — the wrist.

Who took it off?

Rebel surgeons.

Where'd you get hit?

I was damin near — back home. Just a few counties away — up in Pennsylvania. Twas at — Gettysburg.

A red glare swept Coral's gaze. For a moment he could not see the shriveled youth in rags before him, could not see the shriveled face or the foolish visorless cap, could not see the rotten embroidery of the red clover leaf; nor could he see the barred wings of the hawk he'd shot, or gloom pervading there in loneliness.

What day? . . . Damn it, I *asked* you. What day of the battle?

Second day, I guess it was. Right by that — wheat field.

Oh, by God. We come against you! I was with the Fifty-Third Georgia.



The Yankee sat without moving. Then shudders began to disturb his body as if he suffered an attack of ague. His lips were jelly; he hadn't lost all his teeth, you could hear some of his teeth clattering against each other as he shook.

Look at what you done to my foot! Coral swung his leg forward. Think you're the only one got hit? I'd rather be shy a hand like you than shy a foot like I am!

This shrunken scarecrow spook could be made to say nothing, he could not be made to look up. Coral tore the crutch from beneath his right arm and wrapped his hand around the stem of it. By God, I'm going to bust you . . . but the cudgel remained suspended in air. Coral's breath was burning out of his lungs in blasts. Slowly he lowered the crutch. At last he slid it into his arm-pit again.

Yank. Come on. Going to take you in!

The boy tried to arise, but he slid back among cypress knobs.

Catch-dogs ought to have got you and that's a fact. How come they never got you last night?

I held — to — wet places. And used — pepper.

Pepper? Where'd you get pepper?

Bought — it — from a guard.

Come on, you Yank!

Feebly the Northerner shook his head. Can't do it.

You can't move? You claim you can't move?

Naw. Can't — move.

Then I got to knife you or blow the damn head off'n you.

Now fierce tiny blue eyes glinted up from dark sockets of the skull. Blow — damn — head off me? What with?

Why, dad blast it, I got a shotgun back in them bushes! What'd you think I shot that hawk with? Here — give me my hawk.

The Yankee didn't move, so Coral steadied himself and employed a crutch to work the muddied hawk forward into his own possession. He tied the weight of it to a cord looped around his neck; yes, it was heavier than anyone might imagine. It was remarkable, how a hawk could look so light and cloudy, wheeling above trees; yet it seemed to weigh as much as a fox when you were carrying it.

— Can't make up my mind, Coral said to himself.

— Whether to stick you with this here knife.

— Shotgun's back yonder. Couldn't see you from there, count of all the brush. So I'd have to clamber all the way back here.

— Dirty damn Yankee! Not fit to waste a charge of powder on.

— Yank, what was that name you give me?

— Oh. Nazareth Stricker! Sounds like Bible talk.

Coral Tebbs toiled back through the canopy of gum branches and stickery vines. In two minutes the mute crouching ragged figure of Naz Stricker was masked from his sight. He was breathing in engine blasts by the time he reached the tree where hung his shotgun.

He owned the loose extravagant imagination common to many primitive people who have dwelt as outcasts, who have dwelt in lonely places. His hates were simple, unreasonable, intense; in time perhaps he might grow to love with as little reason and with as great an intensity. . . . Pennsylvania . . . so that's where he came

from. Funny place, peopled by a herd of foreigners who couldn't even talk like white folks. Coral remembered standing with other shaggy dusty hungry boys outside the door of a brick farmhouse; he recalled the barn which stood beyond; damndest looking stable or what-do-you-want-to-call-it he ever saw. Stable was about as big as a county courthouse, and it stood on a hillside, and part of it was built straight out in the air, and there were cows standing underneath the built-out portion and feeding there (not for long: the foragers herded them away) and there were queer round signs and symbols painted on the barn in color. . . . He stood there with others, and two fat pink-faced women gazed out at them with swollen eyes gleaming in terror.

Lady. You got some bread to spare us?

Ja. Bread we got. Today was baking.

Meat. You got any meat?

Ja. Pickled pork we got —

Got any beef?

Nein. The beef is all.

Cakes? somebody shouted behind Coral.

Ja. Crullers we got. Today was baking.

Well, the damn Yankee womenfolks could cook like sin, Coral and the rest made themselves a meal, they made themselves a meal under peach trees until they like to popped their bellies open. . . . He saw Naz Stricker as coming from such a house. Except Naz Stricker could talk straighter talk than the rest of those hirelings up North . . . shooting was too good for him. Because he came from a pinkish reddish-brick house, and there was the springhouse yonder where were spread wide pans of milk with cream rising slowly, and Coral remembered how he stood with a tin pan of milk held in his quivering hot hands . . . he drank slowly and tenderly and continually until the friend next to him — fellow name of Jo Coppedge — said, Look, Cory, this here's the way to do it. Jo Coppedge put down the pan he was holding, put it on the damp cool stones, and lifted from inside his shirt a big wedge of solid cherry pie, and using that pie as a utensil Jo Coppedge skimmed slowly across the surface of the milk in the pan, he pushed the dripping chunk of thick rosy crusty pie all the way across the pan.

When he took it out it was coated with golden cream, it was dripping with rich cream, and Jo bit deeply into pie and cream, pushed his hot thin dusty face into the mass of pie and cream, and his brown eyes rolled bright above the thick paint he had thus put upon his face, and he said, Oh, Mister! . . . Damn Yankee hirelings . . . shooting too good for them . . . not worth wasting powder and shot . . . Jo Coppedge got killed right in front of that same wheat field that Coral and the Yank were speaking of.

Nrrrrwhuck.

Dad blast it, *Jo!* Coral reached down and lifted Jo's arm, and gave it a jerk, and then let go, and the arm fell back. The sound of *nrrrrwhuck*, the sound of the bullet's whacking, it resounded in Coral's ears even after the bullet had passed through Jo Coppedge's face . . . dad blast it, *Jo!* Captain Tyree waving his pistol, pointing his pistol, he was crying an order, but there was too much noise, you couldn't hear a word. *Whoooooo*, said the Fifty-Third Georgia and began to stumble forward, and Coral Tebbs was moving with the rest, firing and loading, ramming down another charge, firing into smoke, seeing no Yankees to shoot at, but squeezing the trigger into smoke, until someone dropped a big rock on his left foot and ankle, and it felt numb after the first blow — it felt as if the rock were still lying on top of his foot and ankle, pressing off all feeling. A voice boomed against his ear, saying something about The Rear; so he started picking his smoky way backward, using his gun and another gun he had picked up, using the two guns for canes, and he kept putting his wounded foot down upon the earth, taking regular steps with it, but he couldn't feel the ground underneath it each time he pressed it on the ground. . . .

Coral Tebbs took his shotgun from the tree, examined it with a crafty smile playing under tufts of silky black beard which grew longer and less silky, week by week, in weeks when he neglected to shave with his father's old razor. He cocked the shotgun, looked at the swamp from which he'd emerged, thought of Naz Stricker sodden and weak and helpless (all Yankees should be sodden and weak and helpless) and then thought, What a weary way, back through all them logs and brambles, and my crutches sucking down into the marsh the while. He thought of Naz Stricker throwing his

arms wide and going over backward or forward as lead wrenched through his body at high speed.

It would be a long way, back through those tangles.

Coral Tebbs hated Naz Stricker on principle, and hated him also because he came from Pennsylvania and probably came from a fine brick house, and probably had eaten cherry pie and thick cream all his life. Those foreign Yankees had every damn thing in the world: big houses, and barns built out into the air, and factories to make things, and buttons and shoes and blankets, and medicine if they got sick. . . . Slowly Coral Tebbs held his thumb against the hammer, retaining it against pressure of his forefinger applied to the trigger. Slowly he put the hammer down upon the cap.

If he had killed any Yankees in that battle he couldn't know, but certainly he had fired his rifle until it fried his fingers to touch it, so he'd sent a lot of balls flying. If he had killed any Yankees in that battle they were the last ones he'd ever get to kill, on account of his foot being cut off . . . not even fit to serve as a guard on the stockade, like his half brother, that vile little freak of a Flory. If he didn't go back and shoot Naz Stricker now, he might not have another chance to do it. Because Naz Stricker might run away before he got back. . . . Oh, reckon not. Too tuckered.

— Come back with some guards from the stockade, he thought.

— Not with Flory, though. That'd be a feather in the little stinker's cap that he'd flaunt and pride himself on forever.

— Heard something about a reward.

— *You mean to say you damn Yankees'll eat a hawk? . . . I'd eat anything. . . . They took it off. Right at the wrist.*

— Twenty-five dollars reward? Maybe thirty? What was it folks said about Turner getting so much a head for every escaped prisoner that his dogs ran down?

Wesley Turner was a master of hounds; previously he had worn Confederate gray, but now he operated in civilian capacity as a professional Yankee-hunter. The dogs were most of them ordinary foxhounds or coon dogs with good noses; but there were also three vicious snapping creatures of uncertain breed. These were known as catch-dogs, and they served splendidly for scaring, treeing and sometimes tearing escapees.

— Twas thirty. That was what folks said, down at Uncle Arch Yeoman's store. Thirty dollars a head. Course, that would be Secesh money.

— Why, here was home. He'd come all this way, toting that hawk, and it was a weary way.

Coral stood examining the house. What with Flory messing with the soldiers, and Laurel gone to the Dillards', the Tebbs family was surely eating high on the hog these days. Two less mouths to feed: just Ma and himself and the baby. Once in a while the old lady even gave him money without his asking for it. She said, Coral, sonny, I do feel so shameful bad bout that foot of your'n. Now you take this currency, and go you down to Uncle Arch's and buy yourself a nice plug tobacco.

Coral rolled his chew in his mouth and thought about it. Suddenly he found himself wondering whether that damn Yankee, Naz Stricker, chewed tobacco. Stricker hadn't asked him for any — hadn't said, like most folks you encountered, What's the chance for a chaw? Give me a chaw. Hain't had a chaw all the day.

I'd eat anything.

There was something about that damn Yankee that was important — yes, sir, mighty important. Coral's brows squeezed together as he tried to consider what that important element might be, as he pegged and swung his way toward the house with the hawk bumping against him. Coral had acquired a habit of searching for whys and wherefores. He pried silently, constantly for reasons. The reasons he found were seldom the right ones, the purposes he ascribed were often bizarre, the motives and imagined results were apt to be fantastic. His lonely speculations exceeded the limits of his intelligence, but there was no one to tell him that he might be wrong. He kept pondering.

He froze suddenly, he was motionless for a second or two; an astonished grin widened his mouth. He had found the answer.

Naz Stricker was the first person he had talked to, since he came home, who had lost a foot or a hand in battle! And, by God, he got wounded on July the second, nigh that same wheat field where he, Coral, felt his own left foot and ankle crushed and going numb.

— Long way off, he thought.

— Course, they did give me a lot of whiskey before they started cutting. They said, Boy, get yourself drunk fast. They had a big barrel of Pennsylvania whiskey, and it was good whiskey, and you could hear a little firing in the distance, but it was nighttime — there wasn't much firing.

— Would the Secesh surgeons give whiskey to a Yank when they were going to go to slicing and chopping? He ought to ask the Yank about that. Hell no, you could bet they'd not go to wasting it on some damn Yankee.

Coral Tebbs moved beneath a stunted magnolia tree which twitched its hard papery leaves next to the stoop. Zoral, the baby, was playing beside the step. His mother, her own bleak and ugly childhood in mind, had groped for some sort of beauty when she named her scrawny troop of children. She named them Coral, Laurel, Floral, Zoral.

Coral went jiggling up onto the stoop and into the house. His shotgun caught against the tilted post and nearly threw him backward; he cursed in loud fury, and his mother heard him in the bedroom.

Where you been, Coral?

A-hunting.

What you get?

Chicken hawk. I reckon he's the one took so many of our fries.

Where you get him, Coral?

Swamp back of the hill.

Well, I reckon too that he's the one, and I do thank you, sonny. You want to go purchase yourself a plug tobacco?

I still got some.

His mother, lying down in the bedroom, dozed off again; he could not see her, and suddenly for a special reason he was glad that there was no one else in that one room which served as dining room, kitchen, sitting room and Coral's bedroom. He dumped the bruised dead hawk upon the hearth and stood looking at it, and for some strange reason mirth came to him. Mirth came so seldom. Coral said loudly, Damn Yankee chicken hawk. He batted the hawk into the cold fireplace with his crutch.

— Like what they call a lodge, he mused.

— Freemasons?

— His daddy hadn't been a Freemason, but he'd heard that his grandfather Tebbs was one.

— Jo Coppedge used to say, When I get growed I'm going to get to be a Mason, sure enough. You can go anywhere and do anything, and you got somebody to help you out. Take Yanks: suppose you get yourself captured, and you say to a Yank — You give him that secret sign or utter them secret words. Then you got a friend for life.

— A lodge which only those who are shy a hand or a foot can belong to.

— Secret words?

— Secret sign? Tain't so secret. Sign is: you got a leg that comes down, and suddenly there ain't no foot on the end of it. Sign is: you got an arm that just ends short off. Like that damn Yankee Naz Stricker.

Even while he stood in contemplation of the disordered table and shelves, a wicked grin twitched on his thin bearded face. Wouldn't Flory's jaw fall off if he knew about this? Opportunity to catch a Yankee — maybe to shoot him — Opportunity to get thirty dollars, even Secesh! It seemed to Coral that he was visiting a personal spite on Floral by the procedure which he planned. There was nothing in this world which he might enjoy more.

Well, toting the stuff was a problem. But soon his eye roved to his old army haversack, hanging on a peg beside the chimney. Coral reached up, got the sack, opened it, expelled some mummified remains which turned out to be those of a mouse, and shook the sack vigorously. There. Fried pork? There was a lot left on that platter. It was good; nice pink stripes in it, and fried just right, even though twas cold. Liberally Coral helped himself to the slabs. Black-eyed peas? Sure enough. The mass of peas in the huge brown bowl was studded generously with chunks of hog jowl.

Coral found a torn Macon *Telegraph* and wrapped a mass of peas and hog jowl in that. Cold potatoes. Chunk of pone — the Widow Tebbs's pone was always crisp and well salted — when she had meal, when she had salt. Apple pie. Nearly half the pie left, and let Ma think that he'd eaten it all. I declare, she'd say. Coral, you going to eat me out of house and home.

Out in the yard the wind was rising. This week was unseasonably chilly for March; and knowledge of that wind posed a new problem for Coral. It would be cold in the swamp tonight, it would be cold everywhere. He began humming as he moved with caution about the room. *Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey so free, you done kilt my Pappy, now, damn you, try me.* He was not humming loudly enough to awaken his mother. Which barrel? One over here: that was where she kept stuff. He grubbed around in the barrel, brought out a torn pair of drawers, a gown which Laurel hadn't taken with her. Union army coat to wear in the rain — one of those kind of oilcloth ones; it had part of the cape missing, it wasn't of too much account, but it would serve. And this here old quilt. Coral worked at the table, kneading quilt and raincoat into a familiar roll, passing the roll over his head and shoulder after he had donned the haversack, after he had tied the ends of the roll with raveling twine.

. . . Coral, she'd say someday, what went with that old green-and-white quilt?

Don't know. Hain't seen hide nor hair of it.

He found his old canteen and filled it with milk.

Canteen, blanket roll, haversack. *Foooorward, ha.* Jo Coppededge, Bunny Teasley, Kyle Leftwich, Darius Voyles. Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, South Mountain, little place name of something or other where they camped one night and where Darius Voyles shot himself through the heart because he was careless with his gun and forgot to draw the charge. *Foooorward.*

Once more Coral smiled his shameless smile. He recalled community gossip at Uncle Arch Yeoman's.

Yes, sir. Put you in jail.

Worse'n that. Reckon they can hang you or shoot you.

Says so in the lawbooks. They call it giving aid and comfort to the enemy; and him who disobeys that law is liable to get himself hanged by the neck until dead.

So there was a law, was there? . . . He'd say, O.K. (Kind of speech he'd picked up when they was invading against the North; it meant, All right, mister, that's so, or something of that nature.) O.K. What you mean to do? Hack the other foot off'n me?

Nazareth Stricker. It *did* sound like Bible talk.

Coral, reared in a godless home, if he could have been said to have been reared — Coral knew naught of the Scriptures. Lot of the boys in the army were mighty Scripturalish. Preacher came around sometimes, a-praying . . . and then, they sang hymns too. But that Nazareth was a — was a — Hey, that was it. Nazareth was one of those Apostles or Disciples that Jo Coppedge was always talking about when he got going on religion, dad fetch him.

HEY.

You still laying here on this log? Them catch-dogs come along, going to grab you sure.

Hey. Yank! You want some rations?

The voice repeated the word, the voice said dully, Rations, but the wild blue eyes did not open to glimmer at him.

Set up, dad blast you.

Naz Stricker twisted into a sitting position, his eyes opened and he glared about. The first thing he saw was the haversack beside him from which Coral fished a wad of soggy newspaper. The wet paper fell apart, peas and hog jowl splashed in a mass upon the mossy bark of the log. Naz Stricker gave a cry. His single hand came shaking forward, turning itself into a claw as it came. The glinting eyes touched Coral Tebbs's face in disbelief and then lowered again.

Well, you said you'd eat anything!

The claw dipped into food, peas and grease were dripping, the claw reached the mouth, a gnarl came from shrunken depths of Stricker's throat even while his jaws clacked together and he made sucking sounds.

Reckon all you damn Yankees eat just like hogs.

Stricker wept while he chewed. Tears drained down over his blackened cheeks, they could not wash the grime coated there, they licked over grime and kept sliding. He blubbered between his bites.

This here canteen's got milk in it.

The Yankee wailed in disbelief. Milk?

I hain't a-storying you.

Stricker tried to remove the cap from the canteen with his one hand. Oh, Fumble Buttons, cried Coral in annoyance. He took back the canteen, unscrewed the cap and let it dangle by its rusty chain. He pushed the flask forward and Stricker's dried lips opened trustingly. Coral had a dim thought of a baby seeking its mother's breast . . . he held the canteen, tilting it gradually as the weight lessened, and the Yankee's dark thin neck twitched with contractions of swallowing.

Needn't take it all to once't. It hain't all the milk in the world. Just one canteen-full, you hog.

Nazareth Stricker munched pork, potatoes, pone; he ate the rest of the peas, he scraped them from the log with dancing fingers. Throughout the madness of this meal his tears kept flowing.

Damndest bawl-baby ever I see. Do all you Yanks bawl like that?

I don't know, mourned Naz Stricker. I don't know.

His shrunken stomach could not accept the load, could not retain it for long. He began to retch, his whole body was torn with the struggle, he turned and bent away across the fallen tree, and lost everything while Coral sat scowling.

Too much, said Stricker when he could speak again, too much.

You hadn't no call to go a-wasting it.

They sat staring; and it was as if, in some odd way, the food which Stricker had wolfed and then rejected had given him strength. He emerged from the status of a beast into the ranks of humanity.

Reb — what's your name?

Coral Tebbs.

Did you say *Coral*?

Yes, I said *Coral*. Hain't I got a right to my own name? Here I go fetching rations to you, and right off you start making mock of me.

I wasn't making mock, Coral. It's — kind of — unusual — for a name.

Well, so's your'n.

Twas my father's name before me, and my grandfather's.

Coral imagined Naz Stricker's father and grandfather, he saw

them as bearded Pennsylvanians peering dumbly from red farm-houses, watching in alarm the Confederates' advance, fearful for safety of their livestock; well might they be fearful.

How's your belly feel, Nazareth Stricker?

Feels better. Might — Could I have some more milk?

Coral offered the canteen, but this time Stricker held it for his own drinking. He stopped suddenly, lowering the canteen and saying, Don't you — want any?

I done made a meal.

Stricker ate again, he ate more slowly, there was painful leisure in his approach to the morsels which remained. He ate half of a boiled potato, two more scraps of the fried pork; he looked at the large chunk of corn pone which was left, then stuffed it inside his shirt.

I got some pie, said Coral.

I can't believe — Ain't any pie on earth.

Oh, yes, there is, and Coral exhibited in triumph the great crushed chunk of it.

Stricker shook his head wearily. Wish I could. But I can't.

Well, keep it safe till you can, said Coral gruffly.

Already, and in this limited acquaintanceship, Nazareth Stricker showed himself as a soldier. A thing was there: it was for him, he took it. A thing was not there: he went without. He did not pry and examine, he did not query, he accepted. Coral Tebbs had not summoned him to a Stated Communication of the fierce new Lodge . . . the Lodge went into session, though no gavel fell, and a mystic unseen sentinel gave the requisite number of knocks on the closed door, and announced that there was a Brother who desired permission to approach. The Brother was examined, he gave the Grip (it was a Grip to be managed with but one hand or foot, or perhaps with no hands or no feet); he responded properly to silent questions; he was found to be a Mutilated Militant in Good Standing.

You live around here, Reb?

Out yonder. My old lady's got a little place.

Your wife?

Naw, naw, naw. My Mal! I'm scarce eighteen.

I'm twenty.

Yank, you got the shakes again. Here, I got this blanket roll . . . tain't much of a coat but . . . and this here coverlid for to sleep in.

If I stay, the dogs might pick me up. But I can't move. Yet.

I got to think about some other place for you. I'll reason out a place. . . . Can't take you to the house. Flory trots himself over sometimes from the stockade. He's in them Georgia Reserves, the little scut. . . . Naz Stricker, I had a funny notion.

Such as?

Oh, spose like that smoke was all around, there by that wheat field, second day of the battle. We was coming up on you, and you was trying to shove us back —

Guess I had the — same idea, Coral.

What was you a-shooting?

Springfields. Regular bullets, paper-cartridge type.

Reckon that's what hit me. See, you could have fired, I could have fired, did fire, practically the same second.

It's — unlikely.

But it could have happened.

Yes. Could.

Yank, you live in a brick house? When you're to home?

Yes, I do.

Got one of them big funny barns out behind, sticking clean over the hillside?

No, we haven't much of a barn. We — live in a little town. We've only a stable and buggy shed, and the shop. Out back.

What kind of shop?

Where Father works, and Uncle Asaph.

Asaph? Dad blast these Yankee names! What they make in that shop?

Coral, I'm — tired. Want to go to sleep.

Then get back in that brush, where you was when the hawk fell down. Here. I'll help you fetch this stuff.

They staggered and mauled their way to the center of the little island.

You — asked me something.

Oh, twas just talk.

Asked me what they make in the shop. And I — used to help. I — grew up in the shop. They make feet. And legs. Legs and feet. Coral Tebbs crowed wordlessly.

As God's my witness!

Oh, they do, do they? They make them any hands too?

Usually just — hooks. But Squire Barth lost his hand in a saw-mill, and they made him — a hand. Just for show. Twon't work. It's got a glove on it, with the fingers kind of — folded. Natural as life. But twon't work.

Coral Tebbs sat talking with Naz Stricker until the Yankee, a thin bent ragged seed within the pod of coat and comforter, became voiceless. His breath blew out noisily as he slept; Coral watched him for what seemed an hour, it might have been longer. Then he made his way home and dropped exhausted upon his bed



and found his own sleep, disturbed by nightmares as was Naz Stricker's slumber. One trip into the marsh, a trip home, the trip back to the marsh, laden with haversack and blanket roll, his crutches slipping and catching . . . he had fallen twice, with those burdens . . . the trip back home again.

But in the middle of the night he sat upright, eyes staring into gloom, ears hurtfully alert. Dogs. The dogs were out. That free-running pack, bound to hunt Naz Stricker in his lair, the catch-dogs bound to seize him when trail-dogs had smelt their way to the island. Then Coral laughed hoarsely, and lay back, head cradled under his arms. The dogs were over east, winding and tracking and baying across the Clafsey plantation. Some other escaped prisoner must be their immediate quarry, not Nazareth. And it sounded as if the dogs were a solid mile and a half away from that sacred island, and going farther all the while.

Coral considered the swamp, and considered Naz Stricker, and thought of the Union army coat and the green-and-white comforter, covering Naz Stricker, shielding his weak body, helping to keep warm the wizened stump of his left arm. He thought of Flory, and his grin spread. Thirty dollars a head . . . Turner and his dogs . . . Captain Wirz, sir, I got this here Yankee. Give me thirty dollars, please. . . . Coral slept.

He awakened once more to take notice of his own confusions, recollections and the hard stolid body of a single ambition. A *foot*. Nazareth Stricker had said that they used special kinds of wood. Guin, tupelo, oak, pine, magnolia. And haw? Sure enough, what about haw? Coral could — No, he couldn't. He couldn't cut down a haw tree by himself. But he might go over to the Clafsey place and say, Mr. Clafsey, sir, it might be that you're pestered with chicken hawks? Well, I aim to rid you of them hawks. Set out still as a stump until Old Hawk comes, and then blast the daylight through him. But — Mr. Clafsey, sir, if'n I'm successful a-doing it, it might be that one of your niggers could cut down a tree for me? Teeny little tree, not much account? That'd be one way to get haw-wood, if haw-wood could serve. Maybe peach, maybe apple? Ma had a rolling pin made of apple.

The rolling pin took him on the trail of a more magnificent

idea. He saw a kind of rolling-pin thing, sticking up out of grass. Saw it clearly. But where? . . . It was in dry grass and blackberry spines, over next door on the Granny Rambo place. Granny Rambo's house had burned down, burned to smithereens, the winter before Coral went to the army. Folks thought she must have put hickory in her fireplace, and hickory sparked like mad, and maybe that was what caught the bedclothes afire, and Granny sick beneath them. Black smoke boiling high, and men flocking with yells from the railroad train when they came past and saw the smoke and stopped to fight the fire. There wasn't much use a-fighting it. They dragged Granny out, what was left of her, and got out a few pieces of furniture; then the roof caved in, and the woodshed and old smokehouse burned up too. Nothing left standing on the place except the chimney and the privy, with blackened pines towering sad beside them. . . . It was there that Coral had seen that big kind of rolling-pin-shaped apparatus, sticking up out of the weeds.

And the privy.

Nobody went there; no longer was there a path; the fence was down, hungry whips of berry vines extended over the deserted soil and made new bushes like a barrier. And you couldn't see the privy from the railroad, couldn't see it from the Tebbs place.

You needn't worry about black people straying in that direction, for all of them believed that Granny Rambo walked the jungle which had been her dooryard for twenty-odd years, walked at odd seasons and in odd guise. . . . Saw her in her bonnet. She had that old shawl a-folded across her shoulders. She had a basket on her arm. She walked young as once she had been, with golden curls showing, and in a white gown, and she carried her youngest child in her arms. She walked old, she leaned on her cane, her face was hateful and hating.

He wondered if Naz Stricker was afraid of ghosts.

Nowadays Coral himself feared few things. Scorn or pity directed at himself: these he feared and resented. And he was afraid of bad dreams, echoes of *nrrrrwhuck* and himself hooting under the surgeon's knife and saw.

Coral had another nap, then went prowling round the yard

in the first hollowness of dawn. Maybe it was warmer in the swamp than it was here, warmer where wind could not reach so easily. He searched in ordinary places: no one had gathered eggs the previous evening, or possibly for two previous evenings, so now he found eight eggs. Coral built a tiny quick fire under the kettle and boiled all of the eggs. Zoral awoke and came running out in his shirt. Coral gave him an egg, and gave him corn bread. Mag Tebbs awakened.

What you doing up so early, Coral?

Going a-hunting.

What you going to hunt?

Just a-hunting.

What you cooking?

Hen-fruit. I collected — he looked into the pot — collected five. I give one to Zoral.

You saving an egg for me, sonny?

Saving two. There was five. I et two.

Well, thank you for a good boy, Coral, she said drowsily, and went back to sleep.

Again Coral packed the haversack: three boiled eggs for Naz Stricker, more pone, the last of the cold potatoes, the last slab of cooked pork. He shook the empty canteen. What milk there was left in the house had turned sour, but wasn't there some wine in that keg yonder? His mother had bought a cask of wine for future hospitality. Scuppernong wine, just about the worst ever made, but it would be better than nothing for the invalid Yankee, so he filled the canteen. He left the house finally, and in highest excitement made his way through the forest . . . it seemed that the gray world was grown immaculately bright, promising bounty, promising varieties of wealth. Coral chanted quietly as he went; he could not sing well, but he chanted. Only the few stark birds and field mice heard him. *O baby, O baby, I've tol' you before, just make me a pallet, I'll lay on the floor.*

Nazareth Stricker had built himself a house; he said that he scratched it together in the late afternoon after he came out of his stupor. He was not able to tell Coral that he had been nerved as much by unexpected charity from a foe as by the few nourishing

juices which strayed into his body; no more would Coral have been able to countenance the thought consciously; yet in secret fashion each youth was aware of the benefit offered, the goodness prevailing and digested, the warm human treasure accruing to the pair of them. Naz Stricker had drawn light twigs and flakes of old moss into a pile amid which he'd nested in the quilt. Overhead hung the cowl of the torn raincoat, held aloft by broken sticks, serving as cap and shelter tent. Naz said that he had been truly cozy; he thought that he had never been so cozy before. He remembered — but, again, could not tell Coral — that in sudden frantic awakenings he had felt a horror at the soundlessness, the detachment from that race of noisy monsters amid whom he'd dwelt in Andersonville. And then, for the first time since his long separation from home, he had heard the ticking of the mantel clock at home. He had heard a doctor's buggy rattling away down Lilac Street, he had heard his eldest sister talking in her sleep in the next room, he had heard and felt his shepherd dog, Buchanan, changing position under the bed. He had whispered, Buke. Good Buke. Go to sleep, Buke. Then he himself had gone floating, unhurt, unstarved, master of time and distance, loved.

Nazareth Stricker ate eggs and pone, he said that he would save the potatoes and the bit of meat and the rest of the pone, he drank greedily of sour wine.

Don't you go drinking too much all to once't. Twill put you flat.

I've been drinking this water beside the island.

Swamp water! No good for your innards.

It's better than in the stockade — much better. Cepting for the spring.

You got a spring in there? I mean, you had —?

It busted loose last summer. They said God broke it free of the ground. It was good water, but I only had a little cup — practically doll-sized — and then I'd have to stand in line again.

Yank. You feared of ghosts?

Nazareth Stricker said judiciously, I never met any.

You mind dwelling in a privy?

Would it stink?

No, it's mighty old, no smell left.

Couldn't stink as bad as the — stockade. Whose privy is it?

Next place to our'n, but everything else got burnt; and tis told that Granny Rambo goes walking there, but I hain't never seen her, and I don't reckon she'd hurt a flea. . . . Naz Stricker, could you make me a foot?

Me with my one hand?

Reckon I could help. Reckon I could hold things, and turn them, and cut, and shave away, if'n I was showed proper.

Stricker meditated on this. Finally he said, It's a question of tools and materials. Up home in Pennsylvania we had everything: Pa and Uncle Asaph have got a turning lathe they work with a treadle, and we've got tools galore. We fill orders from — oh, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, places such as that. Guess Pa and Uncle Asaph are now rushed to death, what with the war and all.

He said later, Guess I could try to make a kind of peg-leg-foot, granted we had the proper wood and some tools. With you helping. Let me see your — leg.

On no other occasion had Coral displayed his stump to anyone as an exhibition, as a deliberate act. His family had seen the thing necessarily in their intimacy . . . his mother crooned about it until Coral shouted for her to keep still. Once the exasperated Flory called him Old Stumpy-Stump, and that time Coral's crutch caught Flory between the shoulders and like to busted his back. Floral was nigh to knocked senseless. He blubbered in bed for a day and a half, and his back was lame for weeks. The Widow Tebbs beat Coral across the head and shoulders until she broke her broom, but he only sat laughing, saying repeatedly that he was glad he had not missed.

The amputation was about two inches above the nodule of his anklebone at the narrowest portion of his left shin. Peel off the sock, you damn Rebel, said Naz Stricker. Meekly Coral obeyed, removing the dirty knitted woolen wrappings so that Naz might examine the stump. The flap had grown into place soundly. Naz Stricker pushed against the stump with his hand. Hurt?

Not too much.

Does it hurt, really? Sometimes my stump feels all a-quiver.

Sometimes it feels like my hand — was still there. Then I try to grab something and can't.

Reckon I know. Same way. Oft I feel like I got a left foot.

Ain't it — funny? Both left? Funnier than if it had been me right and you left, or tother way around.

It's just as blame funny as all hell, said Coral Tebbs. The two of them engaged in a tittering laugh; thus they were no longer Entered Apprentices, they had taken the Second Degree of their Lodge. They were Fellow Craftsmen.

Coral, I'm no surgeon. But I've watched Pa fit feet and wooden legs. And he's made some of corkwood, corkwood that comes all the way from Spain and places. But it has to be braced within.

Damn it, can you make me a foot or can't you?

Guess I — *we* — could fashion a peg-leg-foot. Granted we had the makings.

Would it work?

Straps — would be hard to manage. The fastenings . . . twould have to be thickly padded where the stump fits in. . . .

I said, Can you or can't you?

We'll see. That was all that Coral Tebbs could get out of him.

That day Nazareth Stricker lived on potatoes, pone, wine and the scrap of fried meat. He regretted the waste of food on the previous day, but was too much of a philosopher to torture himself idly with unhappy contemplations. He kept looking ahead. Coral had made him able to look ahead. This night he might sleep with a board roof (albeit a backhouse roof) over his head for the first time since he had been hauled from Richmond to Andersonville; for in the stockade there was little or no provision of shelter, and the prisoners did with what they could beg, promote or steal from or another.

His shrunken face turned into a black smile at thought of Gran Rambo's ghost. He had lain amid some thirteen thousand m while they died — of scurvy, of starvation, of untended wounds or simply of too-long exposure to the merciless Georgia sky; he had worked in the hospital, also he had been a patient there; he had worked Outside, he had languished Inside; and he should be afraid of Granny Rambo, he should recoil from fancied odors of

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unused latrine? Were he not a philosopher he had never been able to crawl through the reek of the old hospital drain, to worm his cold wet way past shivering trigger-ready guards, to circle the stockade and embrasures so that folks might think he'd escaped to the east instead of to the west, to provide himself with pepper and to scatter it, to flounder in low places where the wet going was hard; and to collapse at last in wilderness, no matter how loudly the trail-dogs sounded; and then to have the hawk come toppling.

While in the army Coral Tebbs had traded a stolen watch for a broken pepperbox revolver and ten dollars in greenbacks. The money was long since spent, but he had managed to repair the revolver, and now it would shoot. Late in the afternoon he fired the revolver three times at a rusty codfish can and missed every time. Three revolver shots were the agreed signal for Nazareth Stricker to take up his journey, blanket roll and all. Naz must be established in the old Rambo privy before dark, because Coral could get through the brambles and ruin of the Rambo homestead only by daylight or in the edges of dusk. He could not travel there when it was black-dark.

Painstakingly the Yankee must walk his solitary path as directed: through the swamp to the sweet-gum thicket, off in a left oblique directly toward the tall twin pines which could be seen rising in the east . . . then, when arrived between the pines, he must scrooch down and work south until he reached the remains of a rail fence. That was the most dangerous part of his long journey: the woods were open. But Coral had met not so much as a stray Georgia Reserve or a Negro through all his recent trips to the swamp.

Coral thrust the revolver in his belt and crutched leisurely behind a weedy brake as if bent on more target shooting; then he headed for the Rambo ruins as fast as he could travel. It was hard for him to negotiate the last fifty yards because of blackberry coils. He arrived at the privy cursing and scratched. He envisioned misfortunes — he saw Naz forgetting to scatter the last of his pepper, and thus he was pursued by the noisy hounds once more. Would Naz remember to slink behind concealing dried-out vines until he saw the charred chimney on Granny Rambo's cottage site looming before him? Coral pushed open the swollen door of the old

bleached structure and nearly fell backward. Naz Stricker was lounging upon his rolled quilt.

Damn! You scart me blind!

But ain't this the place? This backhouse —

Sure it's the place, but you ought to waited my signal.

You did shoot; you signaled twice.

They had a lively discussion. It seemed that an hour earlier Nazareth Stricker had heard three shots and had started out; later, he had heard three more. They did not know where the first shots came from; Coral had not heard them.

Guards at Andersonville, said Naz. Guess they shot three more of our boys. Thirty-day furlough apiece.

They don't get that!

Devil they don't. Every time they shoot one of us.

Damn lie.

Well, said Naz judiciously, we won't get anywhere arguing about it.

Tangles grew high, the railroad was out of sight, so was the Tebbs place, so was any track traveled commonly by slaves of the region. Together the youths dragged an old plank and placed it across the privy holes, and on this the quilt and coat could be arranged.

Couldn't find much to feed you on, said Coral. He produced half a dozen raw turnips from the pockets of his ragged jacket.

These'll be prime, Coral. I'm fairly starved for greenery. Naz started gnawing.

Got anything left to wet your whistle?

I filled the canteen with swamp water on the way.

Reckon there's plenty water in Granny's old well. Tomorrow we can rig you a bucket. Too bad you can't build no fire, but smoke'd give us away.

So easily it became *we* and *us*.

Coral, two things I wish I could have. Strange things.

Like what?

A shawl and a bonnet. An old lady's bonnet. Maybe one of those big wide ones that hides the face?

Coral stared at him blankly until he saw Satan jumping in the

splintery gaze of Naz Stricker's deep small eyes. Then their glee rose together. Coral laughed seldom, usually he only grinned when he was sardonically pleased. Now he brayed in a choking anguish which had not overwhelmed him since he was wounded. He said, Granny Rambo! Shawl and bonnet! Well, by God, Yank, you gonna have them!

He provided these articles of dress the next day but not without peril. He stole an old shawl which he had not seen his mother wear in years, and found a crushed bonnet in the barrel. He was in the act of stuffing this booty and some food into his haversack when he was pounced upon by Mag, who had been watching through the crack of the open bedroom door.

Coral. What you think you're a-doing?

He felt dizzy, he felt his face go hot and then felt strength and color draining. Well, he said, sparring for time.

Set down on that bench. Look at me. Look at your Ma. What you up to, anyway?

Well, he said.

You got my shawl that belonged to Aunt Eliza; and half that ham is gone that was left this morning, and I don't know what's come with all the corn pone and leftovers. Who you giving things to?

Well . . . I'm helping somebody.

Who you helping?

His glance, sly and mournful and shamed, came to meet hers. He looked away quickly. I got me a girl.

A girl? Whereabouts?

Back yonder in the swamp.

What's she doing there?

Living. I come across her the day I shot that chicken hawk.

Mercy on us. Where she come from?

Up Atlanta way. You know. All these folks wandering here and there, ain't got no home to go to, count of Sherman's army and them Yankee bummers.

Sakes. You never had you a girl before, did you? My sonny boy, my eldest, never did I think — Astonishingly the Widow Tebbs lifted her frilled poplin apron to her face, then lowered it quickly.

When I think about my own flesh and blood — First little Laurel with the boys a-slathering after her — And now you. . . . Coral, you go fetch her straight away to this house. That dirty swamp hain't no place fit for a poor homeless girl. Go fetch her as I bid you.

Ma, I can't.

How come you can't?

Cause she's black.

The widow fell upon him with open palms, striking blindly, vociferous but incoherent. Zoral, sitting in the room beyond, witnessed the assault through the open door and stretched his throat in a scream. Coral was nearly overcome with amusement at the serious rage with which his fabrication was greeted, but he managed to ward off a few of the slaps. He took the haversack with him as he left the house.

Oh, sonny boy, sonny! Keeping a black girl —

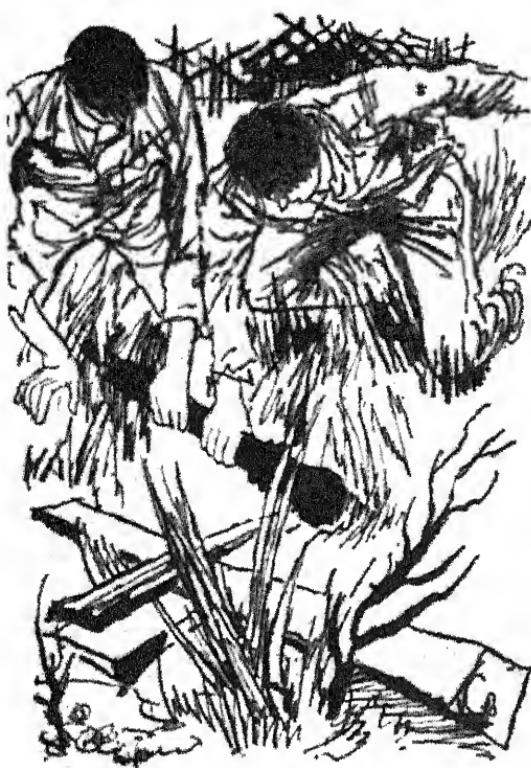
He left her lamenting, and headed for the swamp, and eventually traversed a half circle through open woodland until he could come unobserved to the Rambo farmstead.

You damn Yankee, what I suffer for the sake of you. The old lady caught me with this here truck, and she like to jump down my throat. I had to tell her I was keeping a wench back yonder in the brush.

Won't that yarn make a deal of trouble for you at home?

No, she'll just fret. And heap insults upon me, and then turn soft. Naz Stricker, I want to show you something.

Coral toiled away from the privy, manipulating his crutches slowly among vines. He began to circle the scraps of blackened timbers near the chimney. After much hunting he found the object he sought, the rolling-pin-kind-of-shape upon which he had seized in thought two nights earlier. It protruded from the wreckage, doubtless it had not been moved since the day when Granny Rambo died. It was a portion of the bed in which the old woman had been lying in her hour of doom. Foot-post or head-post Coral knew not which. It was turned from a single length of timber, you could not tell what color the wood had been to begin with, you would know only when you cut it. The knob which had reminded Coral of a rolling-pin handle was about four inches in length, thrusting



You're the one who'd have to lug it around . . . of course the core of it would be reamed out to accommodate your stump . . . it's stout enough . . . that'll cut like iron.

What nature of wood is it?

Could be teak or mahogany.

What's them?

From tropic lands. *From many an ancient river, from many a palmy plain.*

Hain't you smart with your rhymes! Naz, would this serve? It'll be a chore. You'd have to get hold of tools somehow.

Just you leave that to Granddaddy.

Harness and straps and padding will be a chore even worse, said Naz Stricker gloomily.

smoothly out from a larger column. Coral got down on his knees and tried to move the thing; he could not. Naz came to help him.

You ain't even quarter-witted. Never ought to stir from that privy by daylight.

Coral, you can't manage this alone.

Together they loosened the burned-off post (it was two or three feet long) and Nazareth cradled it until they reached shelter.

What say you bout this pole, Naz?

It's gosh-awful heavy.

But we'd only need a teeny mite of the thick part.

MR. CLAFFEY, sir.

Ira Claffey looked pityingly from the verandah, and stepped down to shake Coral's hand. He was a man in his early fifties with broad round powerful shoulders and the manner of a keen-eyed hunter forever on the watch.

Coral, what can I do for you?

Like to beg the lend of some tools off'n you.

You shall have them. You look tired, my boy. Does your limb bother you greatly?

No, sir, I get around pretty peart. But I've studied out a way to make me a peg-foot; but we hain't got the needfuls.

Let one of my hands help you. Jem has learned some carpentry, and we have a workbench here.

Prefer to go my own gait, said Coral stubbornly, sullenly.

Ira looked into the stern young beetling face, and wondered at the almost infernal intent he recognized. Come along to the implement shed, Coral. He reached for his keys. Ira Claffey had employed no overseer since the first year of the war.

Saw, gouges, file, other things which Nazareth had declared they would need. These Coral carried to the Rambo place; he carried the saw slung upon his back. He was eager to begin work immediately in the slight period of daylight remaining, but Stricker looked at his shaking hands and said No. Naz was wiser than Coral. Rome, Nazareth told Coral Tebbs, was not built in a day.

Nor Atlanta nor Milledgeville either. But Atlanta got *burnt* in a day, as you damn Yankees ought well to know.

Oh, pull that ramrod out, said Naz pleasantly.

The following morning they set to work in earnest.

Now, Reb, we must fix a place to saw this post.

They broke a saw blade on the solid bedpost in the first hour of labor, and Coral must needs visit the Claffey plantation again to express regret and to ask the value of the blade. To Ira Claffey's notion the blade had no value . . . it had a value far in excess of anything which Coral might offer in recompense. The saw's worth was beyond estimation in a land where no saws were manufactured except in some crude smithy. Ira found another heavier saw for Coral, and as he watched the boy inch along homeward he tried to envision his

own sons moving in the same road. He could not envision them. Of his family only his daughter, Lucy, was left to him; his wife had not long survived the death in action of his three boys. Sometimes he found it hard to assort their features, the individual characteristics of eyes, ears, hair-tufts. The sons blended together, distant, filmy, without voice.

THE PEG-LEG-FOOT constructed by Naz Stricker and Coral Tebbs resembled a potato masher with a short thick handle, and twin flat staves protruding from the masher portion. Achieving the necessary hollow space to admit Coral's stump was the work of tiresome hours — Coral holding, Naz gouging with his one hand until the fingers cramped; the peg jammed down between stones in the privy's ledge, Naz steadyng, Coral gouging out the hard dry powder, powder of wood like the dust of metal. The thing was cumbersome. It had to be: there must be sufficient space in the socket to admit padding — padding soft but solid, and with an aperture tailored to the exact dimensions of the mutilated leg. It was no mean task for anyone to perform, and materials came to hand only as the fruit of ingenuity and long search . . . raw cotton found in an abandoned picking-sack, and ginned by the boys' own fingers . . . a flannel jacket which had been worn in turn by the Widow Tebbs's babies.

MAG FOUND the supposed situation easier to accept than she had thought possible.

Coral, you never did tell me what is her name.

Ah — Nazareth.

Hain't that a queer one.

Her old master was mighty religious, so she says. It's a religious word.

So tis. I recollect that Pa talked of Nazareth constant.

When rain boiled coldly against the sloping roof at night and made its *tunk-tunk-tunk* in pans spread around to catch leaks, Mag was dimly glad of what Coral had done to shield Nazareth from the elements, and that she was well fed. Poor little critter, said Mag in the ignorant depth of her warm, misshapen spirit.

The true Nazareth, doubled on his privy bed, sloped the oil-cloth above him to ward off steady streams which raced through wide cracks of the structure. Oh, better than the stockade, he thought. Growing peace, the soundness engendered by unspoiled food and plenty of it . . . he stretched luxuriously and lay sly and happy. He yielded to creature comfort as to a vice. For he knew, in any serious consideration, that he should be up and gone if he hoped to reach the Union lines in Florida or on the Georgia coast. Catch-dogs, straying past on the trail of some other fugitive, could find him here; they could tear the calf off his leg, as they had torn the calf of a man he knew in Andersonville. Perhaps most of all Naz Stricker lived in fear that some wayfarer, feeling an ominous qualm of nature as he wandered the ragged fields, might spy that privy and decide to make use of it.

One day — it was a Sunday, and Coral was gone to Uncle Arch Yeoman's for tobacco and news — Nazareth sat with the peg-leg between his thin knees. Laboriously he was repacking wadding in the socket for the tenth time. As yet he and Coral had been unable to combine the necessary comfort and stanch support needed. Naz became aware of voices rising beyond the fence. How long the voices had spoken he did not know. Men's voices, and they were coming closer.

Shivering as if with malaria, he peeped out and over a low place in the bushes. He saw two Negroes approaching steadily. The taller carried a shotgun in his hands. If they continued on their present course they would reach the privy area within a few minutes. Nazareth could imagine the shotgun's blast directed against him; he was certain that he must act before the blacks came nearer. He arose immediately, snatched the shawl and draped himself, shoved the broken bonnet upon his head. His face was lost in scalloped depths of the bonnet. He dragged open the privy door and took slow step after slow step across the weedy area toward the chimney and blackened house timbers. He had turned his back toward the Negroes; every second he could feel shotgun pellets stinging through his carcass; then he heard a concerted cry and scampering, and knew that he was safe. He did not know how big Granny Rambo had been — that was a prime neglect on his part, not to ask Coral

— but Naz concluded that she must have been of average old-lady size, so he bent and shrank within the shawl. He reached the chimney and from its shelter he peered at the running Negroes. They were far across the briery field, scampering toward eastern pines south of the Tebbs place; the taller man held his gun on high as he fled with ungainly leaps: the other lumbered behind, but neither of them looked back. Naz returned to the privy, removed his costume, and sat sweating in the chilly air. Alternately he was shaken by the quivering collapse of hysterical relief and by sheer youthful mirth. What a thing to tell Coral when he came.

IRA CLAFFEY had considered driving to Americus to hear a sermon by Cato Dillard, but gave up the idea when his daughter, Lucy, took to her bed, the victim of a chill. Trays were brought up and Ira ate eggs and fried mush with his daughter. Lucy had discovered a little diary she kept when a child, and she persisted in reading sections of this aloud to Ira; they laughed together, and wept a little in their hearts. Ninny came up and said, Jem and Coffee ask please to speak with Mastah. Ira went down to hear their petition. Old Leander had already conducted one of his primitive services for the hands . . . the Claffeys had heard the songs while they breakfasted. Now the two younger slaves asked permission to desecrate the Sabbath with powder and shot. Ira doled ammunition out to them, presented the ancient shotgun which was kept especially for their use, and bade them stay within the requisite two miles of the plantation boundaries.

He returned to Lucy's room and read to her a little from the Confession of Faith, according to weekly custom. He went from that to the Bible, began to read the Twelfth Chapter of Romans. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love . . . rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.* A hullabaloo broke forth among the people below, and looking down through the window Ira saw Coffee and Jem trotting into the yard in a state of excitement, groaning and voluble. Something wrong, he said in interruption. I trust they haven't shot someone's mule. He put the Bible aside and hastened downstairs.

Seed her, Mastah. We seed her!



David Stone Martin

What is the matter with you, Jem? Speak quietly —

Deed we seed her. Deed we did. Oh, oh, oh, oh — Jesus, Blessed Jesus, save us from the fury!

Coffee, stop making mischief. What did you see? Did you shoot somebody with that gun?

No, Mastah, never even *shot* the gun. But we seed her walking, like folks say.

Who did you see? I've a great notion to shake you, you lout!

Old Mistess Granny Rambo, a-walking and a-walking,

At her old place where she done burnt up!

Bonnet on her head, she come a-walking!

Mastah, we get down on our marrows and pray to the dear Lord, but she was plain!

They seemed terrorized beyond sanity. Ira reassured them, said that Granny Rambo did not walk, that they must have seen a buzzard flying low, that they must have seen a mule in the bushes. Yet both Coffee and Jem were convinced that they had witnessed the ghost in broad daylight, and that was all there was to it. Ira took the gun from them (finding to his horror that Coffee had somehow managed to cock the weapon while in full flight) and ordered Naomi to fetch cakes all round. Soon the rest of the blacks were merry, twitting Coffee and Jem about their scare. The two slaves mumbled stubbornly with their mouths full of cake. In the end Ira was convinced that they had seen something other than an animal or a buzzard. They were familiar with both; and Ira had never observed them in such panic before.

He was mounting the stair when a thought made him halt, half-way up. Perhaps some dangerous vagabond was encamped on the deserted Rambo premises. Heaven knew that the hordes who had fled from Atlanta and other war-torn areas were not all people who could be taken safely to the heart of more fortunate communities. Ira had heard rumors of stabbings, rapes, robberies; he was determined to protect his own household and community. Better have a look at the Rambo place. No telling who might lurk there.

He gave Lucy a description of the occurrence which she greeted with glee, but Ira made no mention of his own disquietude. Lucy did a little sewing, and sipped a glass of wine; then she said that she

felt sleepy, and her father left her to the ministrations of Ninny, who came with a soapstone to place at Lucy's feet. Ira went downstairs, loaded a pistol and put it in his jacket pocket. It could be that a guard from Andersonville had deserted, and was hiding out in the Rambo ruins. No, he would make tracks away from there. So would any prisoner escaped from the stockade. But better go and make sure.

Soon he approached the suspect area under cover of the gloomy chimney, working forward with caution, applying the best of his woodsman's facility to advance in silence. Examining the ground, he saw that weeds had been trampled and fresh vegetable rinds lay exposed. A shred of newspaper blew in the breeze. Edging closer quietly, Ira saw a heap of wood shavings and sawdust in front of the privy. He cocked the pistol; holding it ready in his pocket, he stepped to the door, which flew shut with a shaking slam.

Ira said, Come out, or I'll shoot through the door.

Nazareth Stricker emerged, quaking and miserable, turned pale under the pitch which still dyed his skin.

Ira Clafley studied the youth, then took out his pistol and released the hammer. You frightened my people, he said. They thought you were a ghost.

Stricker was wearing his ruin of a cap with its corroded Second Corps badge. . . . After a time Ira asked, When did you escape from the pen?

Week or so ago.

Why didn't you travel farther?

Stricker was silent.

Where did you lose your hand?

Gettysburg.

— You were there. Did you kill my eldest? Ira asked it in his soul while his mouth said nothing. You were there.

How long have you been at Andersonville?

Came in with one of the first batches from Virginia.

More than a year.

Yes, sir, whispered Nazareth Stricker.

I don't understand why you squatted here.

Well, I was — tuckered. And a fellow gave me rations. And —

Who gave you rations?

A keen blue blaze shot from Stricker's deep eyes. Won't tell, he said.

Ira looked past the youth's legs and saw familiar objects scattered on the privy floor and leaning against the inner wall. Those are my tools. He understood before he spoke the words, he understood still more as he uttered them. . . .

—What mockery of battle now remains to be fought? Ira inquired of himself. General Preston, of the Bureau of Conscription, announced that at least one hundred thousand deserters had slid from the ranks of the Secessionist army. People said that Early's forces were whipped and scattered; Sherman was striding through North Carolina; it was told that Lee might withdraw the defense of Petersburg at any moment, and retreat toward Lynchburg. A man down from Richmond reported troops tattling purposefully about the streets of the capital, impressing horses in order to collect the stores of tobacco; one shred of wealth left to the Confederacy. They would burn that tobacco if the Federals entered Richmond — *When the Federals entered Richmond* —

Well, sir, Naz Stricker said, whyn't you get it over with? You got a pistol. Whyn't you march me back where I belong?

Clafley told him, Hold your tongue, my boy. He pushed past Stricker, looked into the little structure, and found what he had expected to find: the peg-leg-foot with cotton protruding from the cavity.

You've been making this for Coral. A hard task, one-handedly.

Oh, God. I must have given him away!

No, no, you didn't give him away. I'm Neighbor Clafley from across the way — I've known Coral since he wore skirts. He borrowed these tools from me.

Nazareth sat down on the privy step, folding his arms across his knees, hiding his face so that Ira could not see him as he cried.

Brace up, lad. You're not going back.

The gaunt face came up, greasy with tears, mouth sagging in disbelief.

Twould be tantamount to murder, said Ira sharply.

He stood for a few minutes, scrutinizing fields and woods to make

certain that no one else was near, and then he ordered Naz back into hiding. He took Stricker's place upon the step and sat examining the peg, asking many questions which Stricker answered haltingly, lugubriously. It was obvious to Clafsey that the boy must doubt him still. Small wonder. The smell of the stockade flowed around him suddenly, as it had drenched over Clafsey acres for so long.

Where did you think to get the harness? he asked of Naz Stricker. The straps?

Coral thought his Ma had some old shawl-straps.

Those would never serve. Tell Coral that I have taken the thing home with me, when he comes. Do you both wait here for me, and keep out of sight. There may be other hunters abroad, for this is the Sabbath.

Ira added with grudging humor, And I should advise no more masquerading as Granny Rambo, in the bonnet and shawl which I saw there. The next person might shoot before he ran away.

He arose heavily and stood turning the contraption in his hands. We are whipped, he told the world.

Nazareth stared from concealment with a veteran's challenge. Guessed that you would be, from the first. You could never beat the Union.

That is now apparent. But all three of my boys died a-trying.

I'm sorry, sir, Naz muttered.

How sorry are you indeed? Ira wondered as he went toward the plantation, carrying the peg-leg. But the enfolding humanity which his own torture had instigated would not be denied; he must perform this charity, perform it in the face of law and military conscience.

He went to his workbench and finished repacking the padding in the socket, conforming carefully to the shape which the fugitive young Yankee had said must be retained. Painstakingly Ira upholstered the broad-headed tacks so that none of them would abrade Coral's hide. He cut strong straps of soft leather, and fastened the buckles into place, and punched the holes. It seemed odd to be performing a service for a wounded Yankee and for a wounded Confederate in the same act and in the same breath. Ira wished that he might make a hand for the Yankee boy; but — God

knew — if the youth reached the Union lines safely he might in time acquire a hand of sorts.

In the afternoon, having disregarded his midday meal, Ira carried the artificial limb back to the Rambo site, lugging it in a grain sack. Coral Tebbs, scowling and frightened and sulky, was there with Naz Stricker. Like the other boy, he found it difficult to believe that Ira Claffey could be capable of such traitorous benevolence. Coral thought that if he were Ira he should wish to kill all Yankees in wholesale revenge. Ira had not lost a limb, he did not belong to the Lodge, he had not been fighting at that wheat-field place. Ira recognized their mutual attitude but said nothing in explanation, because he could not explain the whole thing, not even to himself.

Coral sat inert while they strapped on the peg.

Don't become too ambitious all at once, mind! Your knee is weak, Ira added, your leg shrunken from disuse. You must go slowly. Use your crutches at first.

On a level patch close to the burnt relics Coral crutched solemnly back and forth, putting the heavy peg down cautiously, lifting it again, resting more and more of his bodily weight upon the stump. It caused him a degree of pain . . . it would all take time, but Naz Stricker had warned him of this again and again. Tentatively Coral slid his crutches out from under his arms and used them as canes to hobble with. Oh, the peg was heavier than he had thought it would be; he hoisted his leg in labor, he perspired, but persisted as in a trance. At last he rested his entire weight on his good right foot and on the spindle thrusting down from his left leg. He spread his arms wide, and dropped the crutches from his hand. He stood crutchless for the first time since he was wounded. His black eyebrows rose up. I'll be damned, he said.

Ira turned quickly away and busied himself with the grain sack he had brought. He produced some of his sons' old clothing: jeans for wear in the forest, a rough brown jacket, a shirt and shoes and socks, an old black hat.

I'd get out of this, he told the Yankee, as soon as possible. Wait for dark, then travel the railroad. There were guards at the bridges, but I hear they've been removed. But take care; it might have been false information.

Sir, I don't know how to thank —

Coral and I have our secret . . . it won't be long . . . as I said before, we are whipped. Ira repeated it under his breath. Whipped, whipped, whipped. Beaten down.

He took a fold of currency from his pocket. Fifty dollars Confederate. All I can spare. We are very short of cash these days. But it will help you to secure food.

Sir, God bless you.

Ah. He moves in a mysterious way. . . . Good-by, my boys.

They mumbled their farewell, they stood united and wondering. Ira went home and found that Lucy was sleeping the afternoon away. He lay down on the sofa and thought of the scrawny mixed future, but it was a peril, a bewilderment. He slept; he was lucky in having no dreams. He slept into the dusk.

You can always take to the woods, Coral Tebbs told Naz Stricker.

That's so. But I mean to travel by night.

Coral stood beside him in the dark. It was chilly. A bobcat made a kill in the distant swamp, and screamed in the process; a few scattered dogs preached their immediate alarm.

Wish you could take this here haversack, but twould attract notice.

Why not? If you want to let me have it, Coral. I could be a Rebel soldier bound for home.

Coral passed the sack to Naz, and the Yankee slid the strap over his shoulder. Coral said, Looky, and through the gloom Nazareth saw the other youth poised on his true leg and his false leg, crutches upheld in his hands.

Don't you get too gay, Reb.

Shan't.

Coral.

What?

That Mr. Claffey gave me fifty dollars Confed. I'd like to go halves on that.

Coral Tebbs was strangling. You'll need what little cash you got. Twill be slim pickings along the way, though I reckon niggers might

help you. All they got in their heads these days is that cussed Yankee freedom notion, dad blast them! And fifty Secesh hain't no fortune.

Guess I'll get along.

Their hands trailed through the night. Long would Coral feel the clasp on his own hand, long would Naz Stricker poke his way southward, choking as he went.

Look out for Home Guards, you damn Yankee,
Don't stick that peg of yours down a gopher hole.
Now I just won't.

Very softly, *Foorward* — They parted.

At first each could hear the crunching pace of the other, going away, soon they could hear nothing. Coral Tebbs toiled homeward. Emotionally he was profiting from war as some wise survivors profit. He had a dim notion of knights. When he was small he had looked long at a picture book someone gave him, and there was a picture of knights carrying shields, with visors lifted to show their faces; he could not read the story, and no one had read it to him, but he remembered the picture, and it spread before him now in the lone cold black. Naz was a knight, so was he; oddly, Ira Claffey joined them, and the dead sons paraded behind; so did Jo Coppedge, Darius Voyles and the rest of the expired Rebels. He thought of the nigh-onto-thirteen-thousand dead who had been buried from the nearby stockade, or so Naz declared . . . they put on their mail and walked in his imaginings, even though they were Yanks and so to be despised. There was something in the concentration of death and peril which had occupied his young years, which quickened his sensitivity to a degree unbelievable. It was as if he walked stripped of flesh, tissues exposed, blood open to the night. No one might understand what he felt, he could not speak of it, there was no one to know.

He was only eighteen, for all the angry barbarous maturity which had become his through suffering. Release from storming emotion came to Coral. Crutches slipped, fell from his open clutch, he lay in burrs and pea vines in his mother's dooryard, kneading crushed little sheaves of wire grass in his large hands, sobbing, momentarily without hope. Damn it, Naz, don't go way. But Naz was gone with not even a star to lessen the night into which he walked.



MacKinlay Kantor

Andersonville, the long novel of which *The Secret of the Swamp* comprises a chapter, is the result of a lifetime of research by one of America's most popular novelists. "Whatever knowledge of the Civil War is demonstrated in this book," says MacKinlay Kantor, "was gained through forty years of general reading on the War and those who fought it."

Long Remember, also on a Civil War theme, was Mr. Kantor's first important and successful novel; its publication marked the end of a long and sometimes difficult apprenticeship -- including, he recalls, a five-month period just before his son was born when his earnings were \$30.20.

Born in Webster City, Iowa, in 1904, "Mack" Kantor was eight years old when he began to help with the family budget by delivering the local newspaper, which his mother edited. From high school on, his ambition ran along literary lines; short stories and novels have flowed from his typewriter in a steady stream ever since. Two of his novels, *Signal Thirty-Two* and *God and My Country*, have been Condensed Book Club selections.

Mr. Kantor is the father of a boy and girl, and lives with his wife, Irene Layne, an artist, in Sarasota, Florida.



ISLAND
IN THE SUN



Illustrations by Howard Willard



Island in the Sun

A condensation of the book by
ALEC WAUGH

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"I AM sitting on top of a political volcano," wrote Carl Bradshaw, the American journalist, in his first dispatch from sunny, beautiful Santa Marta. For his sharp eyes saw beneath the placid surface of the little Caribbean island to the pressures below, which were bound to erupt in a blaze of violence.

About the main story of jealous love — and a "perfect" crime — the author has woven the many threads that make up the complex pattern of West Indian life. The impact of British colonial administration, the centuries old friction between white planters and their native workers, the well-to-do society which carries on its pursuit of pleasure while explosive forces gather — these are among the dynamic elements that sweep *Island in the Sun* to an affecting climax.





CHAPTER 1

MAXWELL FLEURY rarely smoked. He was on that account peculiarly sensitive to the odor of tobacco. The moment he came into the house he was conscious of the scent upon the air of a cigarette stronger than those which his wife and sister used.

He crossed into the drawing room.

It was three o'clock on a February afternoon. The windows were open to combat the West Indian heat, and a breeze was blowing from the hills. Yet the smell was stronger here. He sniffed. Turkish tobacco or Egyptian. Who would smoke that kind of cigarette, expensive and exotic, in this remote obscure little British island?

Who had been here? His mother was visiting in Barbados. His father had been with him all the morning, going over the estate accounts in the office. They had lunched together at the Club. Who had been here besides Sylvia, his wife, and his sister, Jocelyn?

From outside came the crunch of wheels. Then the sound of voices, Sylvia's and Jocelyn's. They came into the hall, chattering

and laughing; their hand baskets bulged with towels; they were sandy and disheveled. He stepped toward his wife; he liked her this way; she seemed so much more approachable than when her blond hair lay smooth above her ears and her cheeks were masked with make-up. He let his hand fall upon her shoulder; her flesh was soft and yielding; but he was conscious of a movement of withdrawal.

"I'm hot and sticky. I'm for a shower right away," she said.

"Were there many at the beach?"

"The usual bunch. The Kellaways, most of the younger set, and Mavis." Mavis was Sylvia's sister.

"How's Mavis?"

"Fine; her heart's nearly mended. I'll tell you later."

She bounded up the stairs, supple and slim.

"I'm going too," said Jocelyn.

He turned toward her. She must know who had been here this morning, but his pride would not let him question her. Besides, was she on his side? She and Sylvia had always been loyal allies. They had been known as "The Inseparables," she and Sylvia and Mavis.

In silence he watched her follow his wife upstairs. They should be such close friends, he and she. Just the right difference in age, twenty to his twenty-three. Most men would have thought of her as the perfect sister: good-natured, blond and pretty. Women liked her, men were attracted by her. Why hadn't they become the friends they should? His fault, he supposed, as usual.

Slowly he climbed the stairs to his bedroom. Self-doubt and self-distrust fretted him as he undressed for a siesta. What was there about him that put people off, that held people back? He stared at his reflection in the glass. He was tallish, athletic, strong; he had regular features, a pale complexion, smooth dark hair. What had Sylvia against him? He never flirted; he was crazy over her. No one could call him a bad match. The Fleurys might not be rich — who was in the West Indies now? — but they were one of the oldest families in the islands. Belfontaine, their estate house, was mentioned in every guidebook as one of the finest survivals from the patrician days when the sugar islands of the Caribbean

had been a focal point of European foreign policy. And when Sylvia got bored with living at Belfontaine, she was always welcome here, in Jamestown, in his father's house.

He stretched himself dejectedly under the mosquito net. There was a party at Government House that afternoon to welcome the Governor's son, Euan Templeton, on a vacation visit. He needed sleep, but his mind was racing.

The door handle slowly turned and Sylvia stole in.

"It's all right, I'm not asleep," he said.

As she sat at the dressing table, brushing her hair, she began to talk about the party.

"I wish you could have been on the beach today. All the girls are so excited about Euan Templeton's arrival. They're like so many Cinderellas. It's not surprising. They say he's good-looking, not twenty-two yet and a title."

She chattered brightly on. No reference to that unknown visitor. Jealousy tore at him. She had never loved him, in the way that he did her. At first, he had assured himself that that kind of love came afterward, in a woman's case. It hadn't, though. He had tried to content himself with what she gave him: a passive acceptance; but all the time there had been that torturing suspicion that sooner or later there must come into her life the man to whom she could respond.

Was this that moment? Why hadn't she mentioned that male visitor? Who had smoked that cigarette?

THE GOVERNOR'S son, Euan, had arrived in Santa Marta on the previous evening. For the last eighteen months he had been stationed in the Suez Canal Zone on military service; he was going up to Oxford in the autumn. Euan's father, His Excellency Major General the Lord Templeton, was now issuing his final instructions for the party to his aide-de-camp, Captain Denis Archer.

Ostensibly the party was being given in the young man's honor, but a secondary project was involved. The editor of the *Baltimore Evening Star*, Mr. Wilson P. Romer, was in transit on a winter cruise and it was desirable that he carry back with him to America a favorable impression of the island.

"The native West Indian," the Governor was saying, "is highly susceptible to American opinion. Harlem is to him what Mecca is to the Arab — the spiritual and cultural center of his race. He places higher value on a paragraph in a New York paper than a pronouncement from the Throne. If we handle Mr. Romer tactfully, articles may appear in the American press that will make our work here easier."

He spoke with the firm confident voice of one who is accustomed to giving orders. He was in the early fifties, gray-haired, of medium height with a trim spare figure and a military bearing. His chief feature was a long straight nose.

"And I want the Americans themselves," he continued, "to be assured that we are pursuing here a democratic policy. Americans distrust the colonial principle; many of them fear that the money they are pouring into Europe under Marshall Aid is being spent by us not in helping backward peoples but in strengthening our hold over them. I want to convince Mr. Romer that, even if we are batting on a tricky wicket, we are keeping our bats straight." Lord Templeton frequently illustrated his addresses with similes and metaphors from the cricket field. He had been a prominent and successful player. "Mr. Romer," he went on, "can do us a great deal of good; he can also do us a great deal of harm. We must insure that he does the one and not the other."

"Yes, sir."

The Governor looked at Archer sharply. Nothing could be more deferential than his A.D.C.'s manner, but now and again his voice assumed a tone that inspired misgivings. On the whole, however, the Governor was satisfied with Archer. He had literary ambitions and that did not predispose Templeton in his favor; but he had a good war record, he was tall, blond-haired, played reasonable tennis, and did not look like a poet. His hair was a little long, but it was tidy; his ties were uneccentric.

"The color problem," the Governor continued, "is one on which Americans are touchy. Mr. Romer must be shown that, as far as Government House is concerned, the various sections of the community meet on equal terms. The party today must not be allowed to form itself into separate groups of white, near-white, brown

and black. If you see such groups forming, break them up. I also want Romer to meet representative members of the community.

"Take David Boyeur," he went on. "Some of our reactionaries will be surprised to see him here. They think he's dangerous. I don't agree. He's young and brash, but he'll only be dangerous if he's handled tactlessly. Power has gone to his head. You can't be surprised at that. He's under thirty and he's not only organized a trades-union movement but got it in his pocket. I've nothing against the boy; at the same time, I don't want to give the impression that he's my protégé. It would be better if you did the introducing. Then I can say to Romer afterward, 'I saw you talking to young Boyeur. I wonder how he struck you?' Boyeur should make a good impression: he's direct, forthcoming. Then I'll say, 'That's exactly how he strikes me. If he's our most dangerous revolutionary, I don't feel I've much to worry over.' You see my point?"

"Yes, sir."

"At the same time I don't want Romer to run away with the idea that our planters are tiresome reactionaries. They aren't, the better ones. Julian Fleury in particular. I'll insure that Romer has a talk with him. Let me see the list."

It was a list indicative of the island's history and fortunes.

Fifty miles long and fifteen wide, with a population of a hundred thousand, raising sugar, copra and cocoa, originally French — it had been captured by the British during the Napoleonic wars — Santa Marta, though never of great strategic or economic importance, had generally been an asset rather than a liability on the Imperial sheet, and several of the old planter families had survived the slump that had followed Emancipation in the nineteenth century. There were a hundred and fifty names of island notables upon the Governor's list and half of them had a Latin ring — Fleury, for instance, had been once de Fleurie. The Governor ran his eye down the columns.

"Colonel Carson. Now that's a man you must have Romer meet. A new type of colonist: the retired soldier who's come out since the war because of high taxation and shrunken dividends."

Then there was Dr. Leisching. He was a new type too. An Austrian who had been taken prisoner during the war and had not



wanted to go back to an occupied Vienna. Most islands had upon their medical staffs a refugee German, Pole, Czech or Austrian.

"You get the general idea, Denis," the Governor concluded. "I've worked out the strategy. You're responsible for the tactics."

"I see, sir."

To himself Archer thought, This will be great copy one day.

BACK IN his office, Archer in his turn studied the list of guests. He had met them all, but he kept confusing them, particularly the colored ones, and most of them were colored; they all looked alike. He was bound to make some mistakes that afternoon; he prayed that none of them would be serious.

"Am I disturbing you?"

He turned with a start. It was Euan Templeton.

"I'm always at the disposal of the Governor's son."

He said it with a smile and Euan laughed, perching himself on the desk and picking up the list of guests. He was very much his father's son, Archer thought: the spare straight figure, the long thin nose; but he had, too, a diffidence that made Archer warm to him. The young man must have had a lonely boyhood since his mother's death in a motor accident in the London blackout; spending his holidays with aunts, with his father's stiff, precise letters arriving from overseas with military regularity.

"If there's anything I can do," he said.

"There's quite a lot. The trouble is, I'm the Governor's son. I mustn't do anything that would let him down. At the same time — well, for eighteen months I haven't seen a woman under thirty who didn't wear a yashmak."

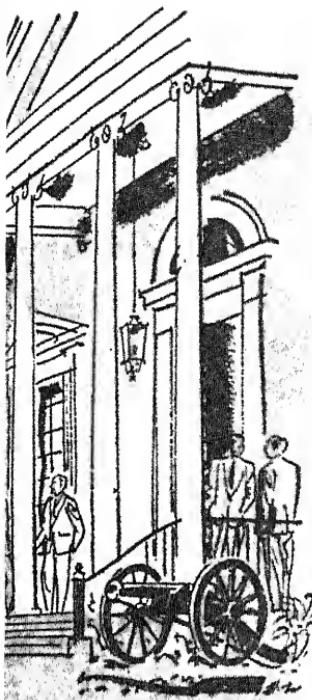
Archer smiled. So that was it. He would have to disappoint Euan. "If that's what you're looking for, Santa Marta's the wrong shop," he said. "In the first place, this is a small community; it's everyone's business to know what everyone is doing. There is no privacy. Secondly, there aren't more than half a dozen white girls here and they're intent on getting married."

"What about the half-whites?"

"That's point number three. Some are very pretty. But they are brought up to make solid marriages, and they are on their guard against white men. They know that white men won't want to marry them, will let them down if trouble comes."

"You surely aren't going to tell me that white men in Santa Marta never have romances with half-white girls?"

"Well, it's not as common as you'd think. And when it does



happen, it's unsatisfactory. It has to be a hole-and-corner business. Everyone here knows what you're doing. Anyhow, it's out for you, as the Governor's son."

"It sounded very different in books."

"This is not Tahiti."

THE INVITATION cards had read 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The party started in the garden, with tables set under the trees and tea, sandwiches and ices being served; at sunset, at six, the gathering would move indoors, for whisky sodas and rum swizzles.

Euan stood at his father's side while the guests filed across the lawn to be presented. Two weeks ago he had been living in a flat and ocher-brown world of sand and desert; here everything was lush and mountainous, with flowering shrubs fluming in red and yellow against wide-branching trees. Government House was built upon a spur and from the terrace he could see the harbor, with its red-brick, red-tiled warehouses, and the schooners rocking against their moorings. Beyond the harbor was a mile-long curve of beach with a grove of coconut palms fringing it; a valley of sugar cane wound like a river broad and green between the mountains, whose dark flanks were studded with the orange-red flower of the immortelle.

As Archer announced the guests one by one by name, the Governor amplified the introductions. "Mr. Codrington is one of our health inspectors. He is also our best fast bowler. . . . Miss De Voeux is matron of the hospital. . . . Mr. Lestrange is our Attorney General. A very formidable person."

Nine tenths of the guests had dark complexions; they were of every shade of color and every type of feature. Euan had read a West Indian history before coming out; he had learned of the immense basic differences between the various West African tribes that had been ransacked by the slave traders of the Guinea Coast. He knew that in the mid-nineteenth century, following Emancipation, Hindu labor from India had been indentured. He had expected a mixture, but not one like this, every shade of color from sepia to olive gray, every texture of hair, every variety of profile from flat to aquiline.

For twenty minutes there was a steady stream across the lawn, then there was a tapering off.

"I must stay at my post a little longer," the Governor said. "But you needn't, my boy. You can start campaigning."

Jocelyn Fleury, from the shade of a banyan tree, saw Euan move away from his father's side and stand on the terrace, hesitant, looking round him. I'll will him to look my way, she thought, and stared at him. His glance moved across the lawn, reached her, checked. She smiled and he smiled back with recognition. So he *did* remember her. There was of course every reason why he should. There was a close family connection between the Templetons and the Fleurys. Their fathers had been at school together, had come from the same part of England. The Governor had made a special point over their introduction.

He came to her across the lawn, looking like a character in a film: handsome and new and wholesome. She was standing by Archdeacon Roberts, head of the local Anglican church. "I don't need to remind you, do I," she said as Euan approached, "that this is Father Roberts?"

"Of course you don't." He looked from the one to the other, then spoke to the Archdeacon. "It's a curious thing, Father, but I know more about this young lady than she does about herself."

"How is that?" the Archdeacon asked.

"I was born within ten miles of her. I knew her grandparents, her cousins, all the people and countryside that her parents knew when they were young. None of which she has seen herself."

"He's quite right, Father. I left there when I was two."

"I could tell her more about the country of her birth than her own parents could. And she could tell me a great deal more about my father's present country than he knows himself."

The Archdeacon smiled. "I'm sure she could," he said.

"Then I should be wise to put myself in her hands?"

"You'd be most wise."

Jocelyn turned toward the priest. It amused her that Euan should have adopted this device of addressing her through an intermediary. She continued to accept the formula. "I wonder what he would most like to have me tell him, Father."

"I should like to get a day-to-day, hour-to-hour picture of the life that is led here by young women of her age. If we spent a day in each other's company, I should have a rough idea of how a girl spends her time here in comparison with the way she would in England. Don't you think, Father, that that's a sound idea?"

"It would be a help."

"I'm afraid he'd find that very dull." Jocelyn laughed.

"Perhaps half a day then."

After a little more banter, it was decided that Jocelyn would organize a swimming party for the following afternoon. In ten minutes they had become friendly. This is fun, she thought. I like him.

There was a pause. He was probably feeling that he ought to be doing his duty by his father's guests. "I mustn't monopolize you," she said. "There are a great many people here who want to talk with you. Let's see now who there is."

They turned together, looking across the lawn, and his attention was caught at once. "Heavens, what a surprise. I'd never realized he was here."

She followed his glance. He was staring at a tall wiry young man with short crinkly hair and an olive-pale complexion.

The Archdeacon followed his glance too. "So you know Grainger Morris then?" he asked.

"I'll say I do. He was in the Middle East last summer. He told me he came from the West Indies, but Santa Marta at that time didn't mean a thing to me."

"Did you see much of him?"

"As much as I could. It wasn't easy. He was in too great demand. The Welfare Authorities send out lecturers from England, you know, to boost the troops' morale; they're all right in their way, most of them, but to get somebody like Grainger Morris, who, as an athlete, was a hero to half the men before he started — now that was something!"

There was a glow of hero worship in the young man's voice. The Archdeacon chuckled inwardly. This was a social comedy after his own heart. Grainger Morris was the son of a Santa Martan businessman. He had won a state scholarship to Oxford and had re-

cently returned to the island after seven years of spectacular success in England. He had won a blue for cricket and for rugger; he had been president of the Oxford Union. In England he had been a welcome guest in any house, but here, because of his color, he could not join the Country Club. How would the Santa Marta socialites react when they found that the man they wanted to fete held as his chief friend on the island a man whom they did not consider eligible for their Club?

"The troops were crazy over Morris," Euan was continuing. "I must go across and say hullo to him."

DENIS ARCHER was having, meanwhile, an awkward moment. The party had been in progress forty minutes and he had not yet introduced David Boyeur to the American editor, Wilson Romer. He had not, in fact, seen Boyeur and he was beginning to wonder whether he had sent him an invitation.

He need not have been troubled. Boyeur had had his invitation. He was at that moment engaged in violent argument outside the Government House gates with a highly picturesque young woman. She was little and lithe, brown-skinned, with smooth straight hair; her features were delicate, her lips thin, her nose almost aquiline. Her mother had come from Trinidad; she did not know who her father was. There was no sign of African blood in her appearance; she seemed a mixture of Indian and Spanish. She was twenty years old. Her name was Margot Seaton. She worked in the Bon Marché drugstore and for two years she and Boyeur had been "going steady."

"No," she was saying. "No, I can't go in. I've not been invited. I can't crash a party at G.H."

"You can if you're with me."

He spoke arrogantly, flinging out his chest. He was tall, broad-shouldered; he had little if any white blood in his veins. His lips were thick, his teeth very white and even, his nose broad at its base. He was dressed flamboyantly, with brown-and-white buck-skin shoes, a chocolate-colored pin-stripe suit and a long thin canary-yellow tie. He wore a Homburg-shaped hat made of straw, with a wide bandanna band. The colors harmonized on him.

"You bet it'll be all right. If you'd been my sister they'd have said, 'Why, bring her.' I'll say that you're my cousin. What's the difference?"

"There's a big difference."

"Not where David Boyeur is concerned. They're afraid of David Boyeur. They don't want another strike."

He beat his fist upon his chest. He was enjoying himself immensely. A week ago she had remarked, "I wish I was going to the Governor's party." "That's easy," he had replied, "I'll take you."

He had talked her into it, knowing that at the last moment her nerve would fail her. It was what he wanted. It would put him in a strong position. He would be able to tease her on his return.

"Very well; let's go then." The suddenness with which she changed her attitude took him off his guard.

She noted his hesitation. "Are you quite sure that you want me to come? It may get you into trouble with the Governor."

He threw out his chest again. "It doesn't affect David Boyeur whether His Excellency the Governor thinks well of him or not. David Boyeur stands on his own two feet."

"Think again," she said. "You may regret my going in. If you say so, I'll go right home. I don't care either way." She held his eyes with hers. There was in them an expression that was not hostility; it was more appraisal. He hesitated, vaguely apprehensive, as though a curse of some kind had been laid on him. He was superstitious, as most West Indians are.

"Would you rather not?" There was in her voice an accent of contempt which decided him. He would show her who was master.

"Come along," he said.

The sight of them coming up the drive was a cause of unbounded relief to Denis Archer. Thank heavens, he thought, and hurried over. "You're very late," he began, then checked. Suddenly he saw Boyeur's companion. He started, stared, and a shiver passed along his nerves. It was not the first time he had felt that shiver and he knew what it meant; it was the last thing he had wanted to have happen here, with this kind of girl. Who on earth was she?

"You're so late," he said, "that I was beginning to think I'd forgotten to invite you."

Boyeur laughed, a loud, self-confident laugh. "You need not have worried about that. I should assume, naturally, that His Excellency would want me to this kind of party. By the way, you know my cousin, don't you, Margot Seaton?"

"No, I don't think I do."

Her hand was dry and cool; the skin of her palm was very soft. Margot Seaton? He could not remember that name upon the list. She was looking at him straight. Had she felt anything when that shiver passed along his nerves, or had it been only on his side? He turned to Boyeur.

"I know your cousin will excuse us. H.E. wishes you to meet Wilson Romer, an American newspaper editor. I'm sure Miss Seaton can look after herself. She must know everybody."

"I shall be quite all right."

Her voice was deeper than he had expected, almost a contralto.

He led Boyeur across the lawn to the American, effected the introduction, started them talking, moved away. He looked about him. Everything seemed to be going well. The more elderly, who were seated, had sorted themselves into strict color groups, white and near-white, brown and black; but there was a sufficient mingling of colors among the others to impress the editor.

He turned slowly round in search of anything that might be out of order, then he checked, conscious again of Margot Seaton. She had joined a group of youngish people; she was laughing and talking, but he had the sensation that she was watching him. He walked across to her; as he approached, she moved away slightly from her group. So she had been watching for him. It had been on her side too, not only upon his. His heart began to pound.

"How is it that I've not seen you anywhere around?" he asked.

"Probably because you buy your tooth paste at The Cosmos. I work in the Bon Marché."

"I'll change my patronage," he said.

"We'll appreciate that." She said it on a note of mockery; he felt very young. He could not think of anything to say.

"You're wondering what I'm doing here," she said. "Well, I wasn't invited. Mr. Boyeur dared me, and I don't like being dared. So I came along."

"Next time I'll see you're properly invited."

Sharply across the noise of talk, silencing it, rang the first bugle notes of "The Last Post." Dusk had fallen; the Union Jack was being lowered. Everyone stood to attention. As the last note sounded the Governor turned toward the house. It was the signal for the cocktail party to begin. Archer knew what his duty was. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I've got to see that everything goes well in there."

"Of course you have." She said it as though he were a small boy afraid of being late for school.

FROM HIS vantage point on the terrace before the two small brass cannons that stood one on each side of the main entrance, the Governor watched his guests file through the French doors into the dining room. They seemed to be happy, he was glad to see, and they wouldn't be happy here if their host wasn't a person whom they could trust. If they trusted him, he'd done half his job. He had been carefully briefed by the Minister of State before he had come to Santa Marta.

"Things are moving fast down there, possibly too fast," he had been told. "But nationalism is in the air. It's no use fighting it; we must work with it. We're committed under the Charter of the United Nations to a policy of developing backward peoples. In the past we've waited until our hand was forced; that won't do any longer. As you know, we have agreed on universal suffrage for Santa Marta, though they may not be ready for it. Then there's a new constitution drafted which will give a majority in the Council to the elected instead of the appointed members; it's for you to decide how soon that can be implemented. In any case — move too fast rather than too slow."

He was turning to join his guests when a hand fell upon his elbow and a powerful voice boomed in his ear:

"I appreciate more than I can say, Your Excellency, all you've done to make me feel at home here. I shall certainly carry back with me to America the warmest memories of your hospitality."

"I saw you having a talk with our young revolutionary," the Governor said. "How did he strike you?"

Romer shrugged. "Lord, that type! Young man fighting his way, no background, no idea where he wants to go. But has to amount to something. White or black, they're always the same. Up north we have Boycurs on every bush. But there's one fellow here that does interest me — this Fleury."

"Which one, the son or father?"

"A fellow in the sixties."

"That would be the father. What struck you about him?"

"Couldn't place him. You said his family was the oldest one around here, but he seems one hundred percent English to me. Forty years in England, he says, married there, served in the First War in the British Army. How does all that add up?"

Templeton was impressed. It was quick of Romer to have seen so much. "It's a curious story. This is the way it was," he said.

He outlined the Fleury saga. In many respects it was a typical West Indian story. The de Fleuries of the eighteenth century had been French, but after Waterloo, reluctant to return to a France so different from the one their ancestors had known, they had changed their allegiance and anglicized their name. Then came Emancipation and a slump in sugar. The Fleurys, like so many others, became absentee owners, and Julian Fleury's great-grandfather bought a place in Devonshire.

"How did Julian happen to come back here?"

"Because his English estate was heavily hit by death duties when his father died, and his West Indian properties weren't making any profits. Julian came out here to see if his affairs were being handled properly. He brought his wife and his two younger children, Maxwell and Jocelyn, leaving Arthur, his elder son, at school."

That had been in the early 1930's. Fleury had meant to stay only a year. But the slump had grown more acute and he had put off going back until the war made a return impossible.

"Oldest family in the island and hadn't seen the place till he was over forty?"

"Yes, though actually he was born here. His father came out on a cricket tour, liked it, stayed on and married. But Julian's mother died in childbirth. His father brought him back to England and remarried there."

"And the older boy? Is he still in England?"

"No, he was killed in the war."

"I'd like to talk with Fleury before I leave. By the way, will you point out his son to me?"

MAXWELL FLEURY was by the buffet table. He watched the other guests intently. One of them almost certainly had smoked that Turkish cigarette: anyone of sufficient importance to be smoking that kind of cigarette in the Fleury home would have been invited here. Why hadn't someone come up to him with some such remark as, "I was sorry to miss you this morning at your father's house." Why? For one reason only, the man hadn't wanted him to know.

He looked at his sister-in-law, Mavis, thoughtfully. She was two years older than his wife, and every bit as pretty in a warm brown way, with soft rounded features and long-lashed eyelids over hazel eyes. At first glance most people comparing her with Sylvia would have thought, So that's the serious one. Sylvia, blond, animated, looked trivial and charming, a girl who lived to be entertained. But actually it was Mavis who was frivolous and flighty, a birdlike creature, always involved in some flirtation. She lived on the surface. As a wife she would be a friendly, affectionate companion; she wouldn't have moods or shrink away. Why couldn't he have fallen in love with her? She'd never be a problem to a man.

He moved over to where Mavis stood talking with young Templeton. Why was it always he who had to join a group? No one ever came across to him. As he joined them, silence fell. It was always he who had to restart the conversation. "Are you as keen on cricket as your father?" he asked.

A FEW YARDS away Julian Fleury stood beside Colonel Carson, the man whom His Excellency had described as a new kind of colonist. Carson was a man of forty, short, muscular, a little bloated, with a close-clipped mustache. During the war, while he was in the Middle East, his wife had fallen in love with another man and he had come out here to make a complete break with his past.

They were discussing the visit of the Governor's son. "What a

time for all these fillies," Carson was remarking. "The rivalries there'll be. How many of them will still be on speaking terms when he leaves?"

It was said in the patronizing tone that provided Fleury with one of his reasons for not completely liking Carson. But Carson was dead right. All the girls were building daydreams about Euan Templeton. What else could be expected; there was a dearth of men in Santa Marta. The livelier young men invariably sought their fortunes in the larger islands, went north to Canada or home to England.

"I'm thinking of opening a book," Carson was continuing. "Four to one against Mavis Norman, six to one against Doris Kellaway. What odds are you taking on your daughter, Jocelyn?"

By the buffet table the Governor, momentarily alone again, took a slow look round the room. Everything was going well. The right amount of noise, but not too much of it; the party had not split up into racial groups. Mr. Romer should be impressed. Was there anything he had overlooked, any professional aspect of the occasion that he had missed? Yes, he remembered now; something he had wanted to ask Fleury. He went across, detaching him from Carson.

"How well do you know Frank Preston? Well enough to drop in upon him casually?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Good."

Preston was another postwar colonist, a man in his middle thirties, an articled clerk who had reached the rank of major in the war. Seeing few prospects for himself in England afterward, he had invested his war gratuity and his father's life insurance in a plantation here. At one point his boundaries touched Fleury's.

"You know that there's been trouble on his place?" the Governor said.

"I've a rough idea about it." It was a typical village squabble. Some cattle of Preston's had escaped through a gap in a fence onto a neighboring estate, a colored man's, and trampled down some sugar cane. Preston had admitted the trespass, but there had been

an argument as to the amount of compensation. The case had been brought before the magistrate, Graham, a white government official, who had fined Preston fifteen dollars. Preston, on grounds of principle, had appealed.

"I'd like you to have a chat with Preston, and let him air his grievances," the Governor said. "Graham wants to avoid trouble. Whittingham agrees with him. 'Keep them happy, let them think they're running their own show, but keep the reins within your hands.' That's what he says. Typical point of view for the police chief to take. I see their point; they don't want trouble. Appeasement's their line, and it isn't mine. They may be right; I don't know. If I chose to put in a word with Preston, I could stop the appeal, but I won't unless I'm sure he's being tiresome."

"I'll see what I can find out."

"I'd be grateful. Here's that A.D.C. of mine, bringing our editor across; I'll leave you to him."

Fleury had had one session already with Romer, and he was in no spirit for a second, but there was no hope of avoiding it. Romer was advancing on him with an air of purpose.

"I think I've got it straight," he was saying. "Let me see. This island is under the control of a Governor, who is himself under instructions from London. The Governor is advised by his Legislative Council and all legislation has to be passed by that Legislative Council."

As he spoke, he watched Fleury closely, seeing him in the light of what the Governor had told him. He was looking at a man of sixty, tall, thin, bald; with a sallow skin, thin lips, a thin pointed nose and a short clipped gray mustache. Fleury's face was lined and tired, but it had an air of authority, self-confidence and breeding. This is the kind of Englishman that I've read about, Romer thought. The man nobody sees, who has position and prestige with the big men. He influences everything that happens from behind the scenes.

"Then there's another concern," Romer went on, "called the Executive Council, which carries out the laws passed by the Legislative Council but can't pass any laws itself."

"That's right."

"And the Legislative is composed of six members nominated by the Governor and six members elected by the people, who have a sort of limited suffrage. But the Governor has a casting vote, so he actually runs the island."

"That's so."

"But under your proposed new constitution, with universal suffrage, there will be nine elected members on the Council, so that the natives will control the island in the future. That's so, isn't it?"

"That is roughly what I've heard."

"If that's the way it is, then, sir, it's what I call democracy."

Fleury smiled. Democracy! What could democracy mean to the laborers in the Santa Marta cane fields? They followed a herd instinct. The new constitution would look fine on paper, but its passing would only make it more difficult for those who recognized the islanders' real needs to get those needs fulfilled.

It was late and he was tired. He had had enough of being tactful. He said in his calm level voice exactly what he thought:

"When you talk of democracy, you've got to remember the background and history of these peoples. They were shipped here as slaves, from different parts of Africa, a mingling of different tribes and races. They had only one thing in common, a sense of bitter injustice against their masters. That sense has never died. As for the planters, they had a deep-rooted sense of guilt which made them vindictive, first toward their slaves, afterward toward their laborers. They were frightened. They were so few, the slaves were many. All through the eighteenth century, and even after Emancipation, there were revolts. And the hatred, the fear, the longing for revenge still simmer underneath the surface. There've been troubles all down these islands since they were first colonized. You can never tell where an explosion will come; the slightest thing will set it off, here, or in Grenada, or St. Kitts. We're sitting on a keg of dynamite."

He spoke quietly; and because he spoke quietly, Romer was impressed. An idea struck him. It would be a good plan to have a man from the paper down here, to be on the spot when the keg of dynamite exploded.

CHAPTER 2

BY TEN PAST SEVEN, the last guest had been bowed out of Government House, but the party was still alive in the form of scattered groups. Rum swizzles and whisky sodas had been served for only an hour. West Indians need two hours of sundowners before they are ready for the dinner which will be succeeded by an almost immediate retiring to sleep, and Jamestown possessed five establishments where conviviality could be continued.

Each establishment had a distinct and separate personality. There were two hotels, the St. James and the Continental. The St. James was patronized exclusively by whites; its bar did good business, but its dining room was like a mausoleum. The Continental was much livelier. It catered for all sections of the community, and planters patronized the bar, usually without their wives.

In addition there were three clubs. The Jamestown was for men only, and no color line was drawn. Red-brick, red-tiled, rectangular, a relic of colonial France, it had been furnished with taste from the auctions of many estate houses. It was crowded before lunch and most of the business of the town was transacted there informally. It was less frequented in the evening; its members were usually to be found after work with their wives and families either at the Country Club, to which no one was admitted who could not pass as white, or at the Aquatic Club, on the shore a mile out of town, to which no one who was not definitely dark could be elected.

In accordance with their separate positions in the social hierarchy, the guests at the Governor's cocktail party dispersed themselves among these institutions.

THE FLEURYS went to the Country Club. As they came onto the porch, Sylvia hesitated; a year ago she would have gone to the end of the veranda with Jocelyn and Mavis, but as a married woman her place was in the bridge room.

From her seat at the bridge table she could see the girls at the

far end of the veranda. Mavis and Jocelyn had been joined by Doris Kellaway, daughter of one of the chief sugar planters, who had recently taken Sylvia's place as an *Inseparable*. Doris was dark-haired, pale-skinned, pretty in a neat, trim way: her genealogy obviously included an African ancestor.

"We're in for the time of our lives," she was saying now. "Think of all the parties, with H.E.'s son here."

"As a matter of fact," Jocelyn put in, "Euan asked me to arrange a bathing party for tomorrow."

There was a lively discussion about whom to ask to the party with the usual conclusion: this lamentable lack of men.

"What about Grainger Morris?" Jocelyn asked. "He and Euan Templeton know each other."

There was a pause. Each knew exactly what was in the others' minds, but color was not a topic that they discussed. "I don't see why we shouldn't ask him to a beach party," Mavis said finally. "We might ask Euan to ask him. We could say we don't know Grainger very well."

"We might do that."

They could not ask him to the Country Club. They could not invite him to their houses without asking their parents, which they would not want to do, but there was something conveniently non-committal about a picnic on a neutral beach.

"It's all very silly," Doris said.

They nodded in agreement. They did not say what it was they all thought silly. But it was, each one conceded, ridiculous in a high degree.

FROM HIS station at the bar, Maxwell Fleury watched his wife as she played cards. No change of expression crossed her face. How could anyone tell what she was thinking? Was she, even as she played her hand, reliving that morning hour with the unknown man who had smoked a Turkish cigarette in his father's drawing room?

He rested the back of his hand against his head. He had been through too much today, going over the estate accounts with his father. The price of copra was going up, but the profits remained

stationary. No one could understand it; there had to be a checkup. A black mood of mingled self-pity and self-contempt was on him. It was his fault that the estate was running at a loss. What good was he at anything? He couldn't even make his own wife love him. But what chance in life had he ever had? He'd been brought out here at the age of four, sent to school with a lot of colored brats whom he'd so despised that he couldn't be bothered to set himself in competition with them. No one had taken any interest in him. His father had always said, "Don't worry. We'll be going back to England soon."

He had tried to be patient, listening to accounts of how well his brother was doing at Eton and at Oxford. It was Arthur, Arthur, Arthur all the time. He'd counted the months till he himself could go to Eton. September 1940. That's when his chance would come. September 1940, indeed! He laughed bitterly. When that day had come, who was bothering about him? With the Caribbean infested with submarines, it had been impossible to send him even to Barbados. He'd had to make do with the high school here. No wonder people compared him to his disadvantage with his family. He had no polish, no real education. He had been robbed of his inheritance.

At his side the familiar topics were being discussed: the price of copra, sugar, cocoa; the prospects of the West Indian cricketers; the coming elections; the chances of West Indian Federation. Colonel Carson was holding forth.

"I've only been here three years, but a newcomer sees things with new eyes. What I'm wondering is this. Wouldn't it be a good thing if you tried playing these fellows at their own game?" He spoke slowly, articulating every syllable. There were those who found him pompous, but to Maxwell he was everything that Maxwell wished he was himself. He admired Carson's upper-class accent, the way he wore his clothes, the confidence with which he held an audience.

"Why don't more of you fellows go into politics yourselves?" Carson was continuing. "You've had a majority in the Leg. Co. through nominated members, but the elected members will be outnumbering you now. Why don't you fight these fellows at the polls, show the colored voters that you are cleverer than their Boyeurs?"

His eye fell on Maxwell. "A young chap like you now. Why don't you stand in your own district? Your name means a lot there."

Maxwell flushed. He was flattered and excited at being thus singled out by a man he so much admired, before all these others. The idea fired his brain. Well, why shouldn't he do it? He was a Fleury, wasn't he? This was his chance to show them.

DAVID BOYEUR and Margot Seaton were sitting in the most expensive seats at the Carlton Cinema, waiting for the picture to start. Boyeur was in high spirits. He had been made much of at the party. The Governor had shown him honor. The American editor had listened to his views. A triumphant evening.

He had also felt proud of Margot. She had never looked lost. She had never been unattended. She could hold her own.

"If anyone had told me that first evening I danced with you at Carnival that within three years you'd be a guest at Government House, I'd have roared with laughter."

"Would you? I shouldn't have."

He stared at her. She still looked to him the child who at that first dance had set his senses alight. She was smiling, ironically. "I was never quite as simple as you thought," she said.

He looked at her thoughtfully. Perhaps she hadn't been. Perhaps that was why she had laid a hold on him that he made no attempt to break. She was not simply a plaything to amuse his leisure. She could be an asset in his career. Why hadn't he realized that before?

"This is a strange place to be saying it," he said. "But I think we should be getting married soon."

He had expected to hear a gasp of surprised delight. He did not. She turned her head slowly and looked him in the face.

"I've never thought of you in terms of marriage," she replied. "It wouldn't be at all a good idea."

"Now, listen . . ."

The lights went off and the room was filled with music. A series of advertisements was flashed upon the screen. Boyeur was speechless. To have been turned down, for David Boyeur to have been rejected — it was unthinkable. She must be joking.

He took her hand. It lay limp in his. An advertisement of a thermos flask appeared on the screen.

"I've thought of getting one of those," she said.

The subject of their marriage might never have been brought up. He felt indignant. She couldn't get away with this. He moved her hand sideways onto her lap, and let the palm of his hand rest upon her knee. He began to stroke her leg.

"Stop that," she said.

He took no notice. His touch became more firm.

"If you don't stop that, I'll leave."

Again he took no notice.

"Very well."

It happened so quickly that he did not realize that it was happening. She was on her feet, edging out of the row. At her normal slow pace of walking, she left the hall.

His eyes followed her through the dusk. It was incredible. Vanity prevented his hurrying after her. There was nothing for him to do but to sit on and pretend nothing had happened.

THAT EVENING, at Government House, Euan was summoned to the telephone.

"You won't remember who I am," a feminine voice with a slight West Indian accent was informing him, "but you met me this afternoon. I was wearing a hat that wasn't really a hat at all; a posy of sham flowers kept in place by invisible elastic."

"I remember it very well. You were wearing a mauve scarf and a wide belt matching it and your name's Mavis Norman."

"I *am* flattered, and it makes what I was going to ask easier. It's about Grainger Morris; you're good friends, aren't you?"

"You bet we are."

"The point is this: we'd like to ask him to this bathing party, but we don't know him very well. We wondered if you wouldn't ask him for us."

"I'd be delighted to."

"Good. You fix it up with him and we'll rendezvous at four at the Continental." She rang off quickly.

"Wasn't that rather odd?" Euan asked his father. "Why didn't

Jocelyn ring him up direct, or even ring me up? It's her party. I don't see why Mavis Norman should be calling me."

His father smiled. He could think of at least one possible reason: that it was a group decision of the girls; they wanted to disarm their parents with the half lie that Euan had invited Grainger, and they'd tossed as to who should take on the chore. The issue turned, he was very sure, on color, but he did not want to suggest that to his son.

"There might be several reasons," he said, "but I'll suggest this one — that you made an impression on Mavis Norman and she was curious to find out whether she had made one on you."

Mavis Norman had not made a vivid impression on Euan. She had seemed an agreeable, nice-looking girl and that was all. But now, in terms of her newly discovered interest in himself, he saw her with new eyes. He remembered that she had long eyelashes and a supple figure, that she walked with easy grace. "I'd better ring up Grainger right away," he said. "Would I find him at home?"

"Almost certainly."

GRAINGER MORRIS lived with his parents in a section of Jamestown that had once been fashionable. Now the rich planters and officials had moved farther out to a bay on the windward coast, while the bungalows on the slope of Trois Frères, the three-peaked mountain above Jamestown, had been taken over by better-class colored families like the Morrises.

Grainger's father, part owner of the Bon Marché and one of the directors of the Carlton Cinema, was a man of substance, but shy and retiring. Grainger had three brothers and two sisters, all, except one sister, younger than himself. His elder sister was one of the chief nurses at the hospital; his younger sister, Muriel, was just seventeen; she was pretty and gay and likely to become a problem. The youngest brother was only twelve. His other brothers seemed unlikely to make anything of their lives; they lacked drive.

After the Governor's party Grainger had gone to the Aquatic Club, but he had stayed only ten minutes. It was gay enough there, but the contrast between the atmosphere of Government House and that of the Club depressed him. It reminded him of how rigid still was the barrier between black and white.

He had been home five months now, but he had not realized until tonight to what extent seven years in England had spoiled him for life in the island of his birth. In England, his dark skin had been disregarded: as a rugger and a cricket blue, he had met his Oxford contemporaries upon equal terms. He had met girls from the women's college, Somerville, at cocktail parties, and they had gone on in groups afterward, to dine. There had been no awkwardness, no embarrassment. It was very different here, with one group leaving the party for the Aquatic, another for the Country Club.

The breeze was warm upon his cheeks. The moon, high above Trois Frères, silvered the palm fronds and the ragged leaves of the banana. The lights of the town twinkled round the *carénage*; the honking taxi horns were faint. Often, in chill bleak England, he had felt homesick for those sights and sounds; but now that he was here, with all this beauty spread before his eyes, his heart was heavy. He was homesick for England's freedom.

"Telephone, Grainger."

It was his brother calling from the living room. He hurried to answer it. "Yes, this is Grainger Morris."

"It's me, Euan. Listen, are you doing anything tomorrow in the late afternoon?"

"Nothing that matters."

"That's fine. Then you can come out swimming with some girls. Mavis Norman, Jocelyn Fleury and I don't know who else."

"Now wait a moment, I must think. . . ."

He must think very fast. Euan had probably not consulted the girls. It was the kind of mistake that visitors to the islands kept making. They met members of different groups, then they gave a party and mixed up in one room people who for generations had tacitly and friendly agreed not to meet one another. He must save Euan from that mistake.

"I'm sorry, but a bathing party's not quite my line. I thought you meant a quiet gossip in the Jamestown Club."

"We can gossip on the beach," Euan persisted. But Grainger remained adamant. Finally Euan yielded. "I'm disappointed. So'll the girls be; they just rang up to ask me to persuade you."

"They rang *you* up? Who rang you up?"

"Mavis Norman."

"But if she rang up . . ." He checked. It made all the difference if the girls had rung up Euan. Perhaps color had really come to matter less here; perhaps it was only the old people who continued the old prejudices. If that were the case it would be churlish of him to refuse.

"I can't promise definitely until tomorrow," he said, "but I'll do my best."

He returned to his chair on the veranda in a very different mood.

SANTA MARTANS as a rule retire early, for they get up at day-break. Within a few minutes of rising from the dinner table, Sylvia Fleury went upstairs, leaving Maxwell and Jocelyn with their father.

Julian Fleury was in a reminiscent mood.

"It was curious seeing Euan Templeton today," he said. "Seeing the two standing there together, I couldn't help remembering Jimmy Templeton and his father at his coming-of-age dance. Exactly the same scene thirty-five years later."

Maxwell rose to his feet. All this talk of sons and fathers, of dances in English country houses! The heritage he had been denied. But he'd show them one day.

"I've come to a decision tonight," he said. "I'm going to stand for the Leg. Co. in the next elections."

"My dear boy, what made you decide this?" The surprise on his father's face annoyed him, but strengthened his resolve.

"Nothing in particular," he said. "It's something I've had on my mind for a long time. It's absurd the way we all sit around saying the island is going to the dogs and yet making no attempt to influence events in our equivalent for Parliament." Because he was quoting his hero, his words carried conviction to himself. "I shall stand as an independent, throw my vote whichever way I choose. That way I shall be of influence and power."

"You have to get yourself elected first."

"I'll manage that."

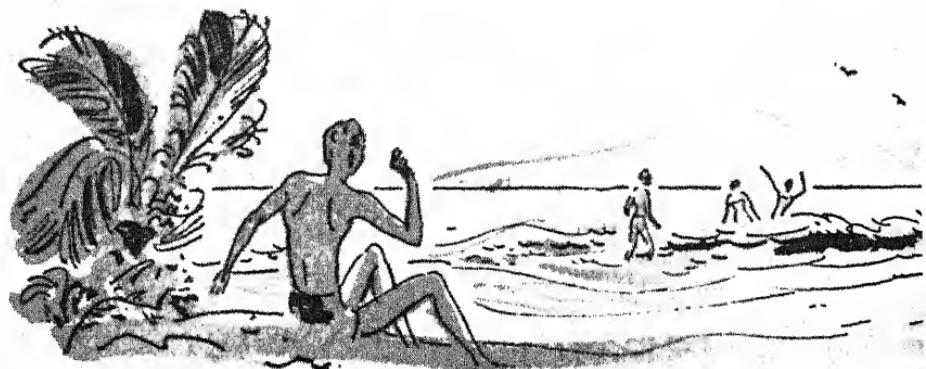
He spoke with confidence. He'd be all right. He was a Fleury, wasn't he?

TRAVEL FOLDERS of the Caribbean present the islands in terms of unbroken sunlight, white beaches and towering mountains. All those things are to be found there, but rarely in the same island. Dominica is mountainous and majestic, but it has no safe sandy beaches, and there is more rain than sunshine there. Antigua and Barbados have beautiful beaches and steady sunlight, but they are flat. A few islands like Santa Lucia do, however, have mountains, white beaches and a dry climate. Santa Marta is one of these lucky ones.

The beach that Jocelyn Fleury had chosen for her swimming party was ten miles out of Jamestown and one of the least frequented; here Grainger Morris would not be embarrassed by the presence of her friends. It was a very pretty beach, edged with coconut palms, with a wide-spreading mango tree to whose shade you could retire when the sun grew too hot. It faced northwest.

"There's always a chance of seeing the 'green ray' there, right at sunset," Jocelyn had informed Euan.

AT HALF PAST THREE that same afternoon Denis Archer was the victim of nervous turmoil. He had driven the Governor to the cricket ground; on his way back he had passed the Bon Marché pharmacy and, turning his head, had seen Margot Seaton standing by a showcase. Their eyes met, and she had smiled. He stamped on the accelerator.





Back in his office he discovered that his hand was trembling. He could hardly hold his pen. Steady, he warned himself. Steady. This is the danger point. He knew the signs; his experience in gallantry had not been extensive, but it had been intense.

The minute hand on his watch pointed to nine. He tidied his desk, locked away a confidential document. He still had time to drive back through the town before he met the others for the picnic.

He slowed down as he reached the drugstore and craned his neck; he could not see her. His foot rested on the accelerator, but he did not press it. He reminded himself that he needed a new tube of tooth paste. He pulled on the brake.

She was standing behind the counter.

"I want a tube of tooth paste," he informed her.

"Certainly. What kind?"

"Do you have Eucryl?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll have that."

She took the tube from the glass case. He laid three shillings on the counter. He watched her pack up the parcel. If he got out of this shop with nothing said, he'd have stayed on the safe side of the danger line. If he made no move now, he never could. Everything hinged on the next sixty seconds.

"There." She handed the package across and their eyes met.

He felt weak, defenseless, chained; yet he was conscious of a vibrant, triumphant sense of power.

"I've got to see you again, somewhere; not here," he said.

There was a moment of silence. Her glance met his steadily.

"Are you going to the Nurses' Dance?" he asked.

"Yes."

"We'll dance together then."

She nodded. There was no going back now. He was committed. He left and drove quickly to the Continental.

THE OTHERS were already waiting, and they all crowded into Jocelyn's car. Euan's attention was concentrated upon Mavis. She was even prettier than he had suspected. Had he really made an impression on her?

They drove through typical West Indian villages: haphazard collections of shingle huts, perched on boulders, shaded by mango and by breadfruit trees, with canoes drawn up along the beach, and fishing nets hanging up to dry. There was a cheerful farmyard atmosphere about them, with chickens and pigs and children tumbling over one another among the stones. Yet actually the very characteristics that made them picturesque made them unhealthful also; they were damp and airless and mosquitoes bred there.

Finally, the car drew up beside the beach; the girls changed in the car, the men behind a cluster of mangrove bushes. Euan stretched himself upon the sand and Jocelyn sat beside him.

I must find out what he's really like, she thought. What was he planning to do, she asked him, when he came down from Oxford?

He shrugged. "I'll have three years there. That ought to give me time to find out. It's curious, you know, being a peer today. It's an advantage, I don't pretend it isn't. But it's hard to know how to make the best use of it. My grandfather had an estate to run, an assured place as a legislator. The House of Lords had real power then; a peerage was a profession. But it's different now.

"In the first place I shan't be able to keep up Tavernslake. It won't stand another attack of death duties. Then, no one knows what the House of Lords will amount to in thirty years. You can't bank on its amounting to a thing. And there are quite a few jobs in which a peerage, at the start anyway, is a handicap. It's hard to begin at the bottom of the tree when you've a handle to your name. I realized that in the army. Before I had my commission there was a corporal who always read out my name in full, Private the Hon. Templeton E. J. Number six-one-three-nine. There'd be a sneer in his voice and someone would always snigger."

Euan turned and watched Mavis as she came out of the water. She took off her bathing cap and shook out her hair.

"She's very attractive, isn't she?" he said. "And such good company."

"You should tell that to her, not me. She'd like to hear it."

It was said with a twinkle and they laughed together. Jocelyn would be a friendly and amusing confidante, Euan thought.

Mentally, Jocelyn shrugged. So that was the way it was. Mavis again. Men liked Jocelyn, felt at ease with her, confided in her, but it was for girls like Mavis that they fell. Poor Mavis was always getting into trouble, always being let down by someone. But Jocelyn would like for a change to have someone sufficiently involved with her to treat her badly.

Mavis settled herself beside them on the beach.

"Have you a punch in that thermos?" she inquired.

She had a sudden feeling that she could use a drink. She had been conscious of Euan's glances in the car. She had seen that look before; that's how it had been too often. Why was it always this way, with her? Why couldn't a man whom she'd known for three months say, It's an extraordinary thing, but I've begun to realize that I'm in love with you . . . you grow on one. There'd be so much more likelihood of that lasting.

FROM A ROCK by himself Denis Archer was throwing stones into the water. Doris was swimming with Grainger Morris.

"Grainger," Euan called out. "Come and join us."

He wanted Grainger to talk to Jocelyn so that he could talk to Mavis. But it was next to Mavis that Grainger stretched himself. "I often used to wonder when I was in England how you'd look when I got back," he said.

"I shouldn't have thought you knew that I existed."

"I remember you clearly, as a child. Do you remember a party at G.H. when you won the obstacle race?"

"Of course. I was eleven then."

"You looked so triumphant when you went up to take your prize. I remember how you held out both hands to take it. It was a book, I think."

"I've got it still. Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*."

"You were taking such a fresh, happy pleasure in it all. I was so glad for your sake. I've often thought about that day. I hoped life was turning out for you the way you wanted it."

She looked away; she felt herself surprisingly near to tears; how it all came back, a white frock with green trimming and the book that she had put that night beside her bed so that it should be the

first thing she saw when she woke up. It was nice to have someone remembering her as she had been that day.

THERE WERE no guests that night at Government House.

"We must work out our plan of campaign," the Governor said. "These next months must be gay. Denis, what would you suggest?"

"There's the Nurses' Dance next week, sir. Why not a dinner party first? Just young people, like the girls this afternoon?"

"What about Grainger Morris? The girls like him."

It was Euan who suggested that. His father's hesitation before agreement was so brief that neither of the young men noticed it. Normally, Templeton would not have invited a man of color to meet white girls at a small dinner party, but since this was an accepted friendship, and they were going on to dance in public, it was a good opportunity of showing the community that Government House admitted no racial distinctions. But if he was going to ask Morris, he must ask at least one girl of color, too. He could not have people saying, H. E. asks the men but he won't have the women to his party.

"Can you think of any girl who's respectable and not, shall we say, too African, who'd help make the party go?"

"I'll think, sir."

A wild idea occurred to Archer; so wild that he did not know whether he dared put it to the proof. He had a moment of panic, then he knew that he'd despise himself if he didn't risk it. "Do you know Margot Seaton, sir?"

"I don't think I do."

"She was here yesterday. She's pretty and quick-witted. Works at the Bon Marché."

"What about her people?"

"She's a cousin of David Boyeur."

"We don't want him at the dinner." But, the Governor reflected, to invite a relative of his might prove a salutary lesson to the young demagogue; it would diminish his self-importance. "Ask her, certainly," he added, "if she won't disgrace us."

"I can promise you she won't, sir."

And that, he told himself, was that.

THAT EVENING David Boyeur called at the Bon Marché pharmacy.

"I've come to apologize," he said.

"O.K."

"Have you decided which party you'd like to join for the Nurses' Dance, the Salmons' or the Levasseurs'?"

"That's something I want to talk to you about. I shan't be able to go with you. The Governor has invited me to dinner."

"The Governor's what?"

"I warned you that you might regret daring me to go to that garden party."

CHAPTER 3

THREE DAYS later Julian Fleury fulfilled his promise to the Governor. He needed to have a talk with Maxwell. He could call in on Preston on his way.

He was in a thoughtful mood as he drove out. His son's surprising resolve to stand for election confirmed his suspicion that all was by no means well there. Maxwell had always been a problem, but Julian had hoped that marriage and responsibility would supply a medicine. He had given the young couple Belfontaine as a wedding present. Things had not turned out the way that he had hoped. The estate was not showing the profits that it should, and Maxwell was obviously discontented.

Times on the island were difficult, and likely to become more difficult. Whitehall courtiers drew up blueprints for colonial development with no firsthand knowledge of the countries for which they legislated. In London they met only cultured and educated West Indians; how could they appreciate the backwardness, the superstitious ignorance, the basic savagery of the average peasant? These people could so easily become the victims of corrupt, self-seeking politicians.

As he drove out to Belfontaine he saw signs everywhere of decay. Large stretches of land had gone out of cultivation, and were used for grazing. The cane had already been cut, the coffee already planted; here and there he saw a peasant or two collecting coconuts;

casual domestic occupations like weeding and charcoal burning were in progress. But everywhere there was an air of placid and contented apathy. Nobody was working hard. No one had worked hard since Emancipation. Thanks to their gardens, the peasants managed well enough on their small wages, and did little work. Occasional men like Boyeur had ideas of grandeur. There were exceptional men like Grainger Morris. But for the rest . . .

What meaning could "democracy" have to this friendly feckless people? Trouble was bound to come if power was put into their hands too soon.

THE PRESTONS' estate was four miles from Belfontaine. As Julian swung up the drive, he saw Mrs. Preston on her veranda, knitting. She rose to greet him, and his spirits sank. He had forgotten how her company depressed him.

Of medium height, freckled, with sandy hair, she had a long, thin neck, a high-pitched whining voice. She was not popular in the island; her manner conveyed that, as a member of a good county family in England, she felt herself superior to her environment.

Fleury greeted her and then asked about her husband.

"He's happy enough. Why shouldn't he be? He's in the open air; he's busy with his hands; he likes his laborers, I can't think why. They drive me mad: they steal, they're lazy, they need flogging. They've no feeling for the animals. They'd let them starve if we didn't watch them. Would you credit it, we've actually caught them eating the food we put out for the pigs."

"I hear you're having trouble with your neighbor Montez."

"Indeed we are. Some of our cattle got through a gap in the fence; and how did that gap get there I should like to know? It was a new fence and a stout one. It was Montez himself who made the gap. We can't prove it but I'm convinced. Whenever these colored men want a few dollars, they let our cattle through onto their land. It's a racket."

Half an hour earlier he had been thinking along very much the same lines himself, but he resented the criticism coming from Mrs. Preston. "Was there much damage done?" he asked.

"Frank could tell you about that. It's the principle of the thing

that worries me. If Frank takes this lying down, anything may happen."

Fleury nodded.

He turned to see Preston coming up the walk. He was a short stocky man with a close-clipped military mustache. He started at the sight of Fleury. "This is an honor and a surprise."

"I stopped by on my way to Belfontaine. Been talking to your wife about the trouble you've been having with that neighbor of yours. I hear you're appealing against Graham's verdict."

"I should say I am. The man has no right to be a magistrate."

"It doesn't seem a very heavy fine. Fifteen dollars, and there *was* trespass."

"That's not the point. A deliberate attempt was made to exploit the incident. There *was* a gap in my wire, though I don't know how it got there. My cattle got into his property. I was prepared to make reasonable amends. It was old cane, stubble. I asked to see the damage. He showed me hoof marks, but I couldn't see that anything had been destroyed. 'Very well,' I said, 'we'll get the agricultural adviser to inspect and estimate the damage.' I put in my report to Harrison, at the Agricultural Department.

"You know what Harrison is like. He took four weeks to make his visit. By then the new cane had grown. He asked to see the damage and Montez told him that you could not see it now. 'In that case,' Harrison said, 'there is no damage,' so I refused to pay. Montez proceeded to sue me for fifty dollars. Graham came around to see me. You know the kind of magistrate Graham is. He wanted me to settle for twenty-five dollars out of court. But I stood by my rights. I went into court, with Harrison's report.

"Graham did not like it at all. He wants to keep on the right side of these peasants; doesn't want his tires slashed. He found a quibble in the report. It didn't say there was no damage, but only that Harrison could see no damage. So Graham asked for an official report."

"What happened then?"

"There was a long delay; but finally a date was fixed at court. That day I had a touch of fever. I sent a message to Graham. He said my attendance wasn't necessary, that he had heard my evi-

dence. Then in my absence, mark you, he fined me fifteen dollars. I never heard of such a breach of justice. I won't stand for that."

"Which lawyer have you got to handle your case?"

"I haven't one. I don't trust these colored lawyers. They're all hand in glove. I'll say my own say before a judge. Probably I shan't get justice, but I'll have made my protest."

Fleury made no reply. As Preston talked, he had felt his irritation rising. He could see Graham's point of view. Trespass had been committed. Trespass presumed damage. An ignorant peasant would feel entitled to compensation. Graham understood that. He was the magistrate; he knew his people and he had to keep the peace. Legally he was probably at fault, but Fleury, living in the district, felt sure that Graham had acted in the general interest.

He would advise Jimmy Templeton to suggest to Preston that he let the matter drop.

He rose to his feet. "I must be on my way," he said.

BELFONTAINE, with its avenue of palms, its "welcoming arms" stairway, its dignified colonnaded portico and two-storied frontage, is a familiar illustration in West Indian guidebooks. It is one of the few estate houses in the Caribbean that have survived hurricanes, earthquakes and the neglect of absentee ownership.

As Fleury turned his car into the drive, Maxwell cantered across the paddock. He was hot, dusty and frowning. "That tractor's broken down again," he said. "They're the most hopeless people; all they're good for is cutting cane with a cutlass. They drive me mad. Sylvia," he called, "I'll be ready in five minutes. I'd like a sour cocktail before lunch."

Sylvia came out of the house, looking very cool and fresh in a light cotton frock, her hair smooth and shining. As her father-in-law came up the steps, she ran to meet him, lifted herself upon her toes and flung her arms around his neck; her cheek was soft and cool. There was a pleasant scent of lavender. A young man ought to be happy with a wife like this, Julian thought.

They lunched in the high cool dining room, darkened by closed shutters. The long walnut table was well polished, the silver shone. The fish soup was cold without being iced. Sylvia was a good

manager. A radio was playing dance music. Did they have it on, Fleury wondered, to take the place of conversation? They seemed to have little to say to each other.

"Have you wondered what effect your going in for politics will have upon our own laborers?" he asked Maxwell. "Don't you think it will hurt your prestige to argue with them? Twenty years ago we would never have done it."

"I'm not going to argue, just give them the facts. I'm going to tell them not to be silly fools. They're uneducated, and they'd better place their trust in men who are." Maxwell spoke in the resentful tone that was now habitual with him.

There was little chance as Julian saw it of his son's being elected. It might be as well for him to learn his lesson. But his heart was heavy as he lay down afterward for his siesta.

When the heat had lessened they went round the estate. It was mainly coconuts, with sugar cane round the house and a little cocoa in the foothills. A couple of laborers who were supposed to be collecting coconuts were sitting on their haunches, smoking. Maxwell blazed out at them.

"Lazy sods, what you need is an overseer with a whip! That's the only way you work. Come along now, on with it!"

There was venom in his voice. He doesn't like them, his father thought. And that was the one thing a West Indian would not





forgive. He'd forgive anything in the long run to the man who liked him. Probably that was what was wrong with the estate. The men didn't like Maxwell, wouldn't work for him. It was as simple as that. A little farther on Fleury noticed that there had been a minor landslide and a ditch was dammed. A pond of stagnant water had formed. "Mosquitoes'll breed there," he said.

"I suppose they will. I must get it seen to."

"Is anyone responsible for keeping a special lookout for that kind of thing?"

"I am myself; but I can't go round the estate every day."

He spoke casually, with indifference. His father made no comment. Maxwell had flown into a fury over an idle laborer when everyone knew that a West Indian laborer spent half his time squatting on his heels, yet he was not checking stagnant water. That was what was wrong out here: scenes over trivialities and no attention to what really mattered.

"I won't stay on for tea," he said when the tour was finished. "I want to be back before it's dark."

THE FOLLOWING afternoon Julian Fleury drove to the airport to meet his wife, Betty. She had been away two weeks, and he was conscious of a quickening excitement. It was good to feel like this after thirty-five years of marriage. He was very lucky.

As she came down the gangway of the plane, he had the same sense that he had had in their days of courtship of seeing her afresh, for the first time. She waved, and gave him a warm and friendly smile, very like Jocelyn's, as she came across the asphalt to him.

"Darling. It's lovely to be back."

She came into his arms, and there was under his nostrils her faint scent of lilac. It was a real kiss of welcome.

"I feel incomplete when you're away," he said.

"Is anyone home?"

He shook his head. "Sylvia and Maxwell are at Belfontaine. Jocelyn's out with Euan Templeton."

"Now that's something I want to hear all about."

They had so much to tell each other that it was hard to know where to start. "This is the best part of going away," she said. "All

the time I kept saying to myself when anything amusing happened, 'How I shall enjoy telling Julian this.'

They had so much gossip to exchange that they had finished tea and the sun had already sunk behind *Trois Frères* before they began to talk about their children. They had left that until last, because it was something serious. They were neither of them completely happy about their children. Yet they were conscious that they did not see their joint problems from the same angle.

"Have you heard that Maxwell is planning to run for Council?" Julian asked finally. He gave her the bare details.

"Poor little boy," she said. There was a note of pity in her voice that irritated him. What had Maxwell done to deserve sympathy? "Does he stand any chance of getting in?"

"I shouldn't say so. But no other white man will get in either. He'll not be out of things. He'll be in the same boat with others."

"That's always been his trouble, being out of things."

But why had it been? Julian thought. Why couldn't Maxwell have accepted the West Indian pattern? He switched the subject.

"I'm worried about Jocelyn too," he said.

"Oh."

There was a bleak lack of interest in that "oh" that matched, on her side, the irritation that her "poor little boy" had stirred in him; he was guiltily aware that more than once he had failed to fight Jocelyn's battles, so as to avoid a tension with her mother. People talked of the injuries done to the children of an unhappy marriage, but the children of happy marriages were victims too, the parents resenting having their children come between them. He'd got to be firm now.

"Jocelyn must be sent back to England — for six months, at least. Who is there for her to marry here? She'll turn out a Mavis Norman, or a shriveled spinster."

"She'd feel so lost in England."

"Not if we go with her. We need a change anyway."

"But can Maxwell run the estate single-handed?"

"I've thought about that. They could move into Jamestown, where Maxwell would undertake the office side of the work and I'd let someone else run the estate. Preston, for instance."

"I suppose it's all right if you say it is. If you think six months for Jocelyn in England is worth all this bother."

"It's absolutely essential in my opinion. I'll talk to Maxwell about moving into town. It may improve matters between himself and Sylvia." He slipped his arm through hers, pressing it against his side, as they rose. "Nothing must come between us. Nothing."

She returned the pressure. "Nothing. Not ever."

THE EVENING of the Nurses' Dance, while Jocelyn dined at Government House, the Fleurys brought up the subject of the English trip with Maxwell and Sylvia. "Of course, we don't want Jocelyn to think she's the reason for our going," Betty said. "I will tell her I am worried about your father's health, that he needs a change to cool climate and the advice of a European doctor."

"But how about the Jamestown office?" Maxwell said.

"That's the very point," Julian broke in. "The work in town is tricky; it could only be carried on by someone in whom I had the most perfect trust. What I suggest is that you should come into Jamestown and run the store until I come back. I know it's a lot to ask, giving up your home, but it wouldn't be for long."

He paused, glancing from one to the other. He noted an eager look in Sylvia's eyes. He had been right in guessing that she was bored at Bellfontaine.

Maxwell had noted that look too. Anger shot along his nerves. Did she want to come into town so that she would have more opportunities of seeing the man who smoked Turkish cigarettes?

"This needs thinking about," he said.

THE NURSES' DANCE was held in the St. James. The Governor's party was not expected until ten, and when the band started to play at half past nine, no one took the floor though half the tables were already occupied.

Ten chairs had been set round Boyeur's table. He was not the host, but he was making himself the center of conversation. "In a few weeks' time," he was saying, "we shall have our new constitution. Then our own representatives will pass the laws that will raise the standard of living. Income tax will be raised to meet a rise in

wages. We shall nationalize the sugar factory. The power will be in our hands, that's what I tell the laborers. I've got these people where I want them."

As he spoke, he kept his eye upon the entrance. He was anxious not to miss the arrival of the Governor's party. He had not seen Margot for a week. Tonight he would learn who his successor was. The Governor's son? If that was the case, a useful lever would have been placed within his hands. Margot was an ally he did not propose to lose. For him she was still the pivot of the evening.

The arrival of the G.H. party was like the raising of a curtain on a play: there was a general feeling, Now we can start to enjoy ourselves. At the same time its immediate effect was damping. Many West Indians do not touch alcohol; music is their stimulant, and it is only after the rhythm of the music has beaten along their nerves for half an hour that they become worked up. For a quarter of an hour they would be too busy observing His Excellency for that to happen. His Excellency was aware of their attention and it pleased him. He felt like a film star.

It was time for him to open the ball. He looked round his table, and his glance rested upon Margot. Everyone would be wondering whether he would choose Jocelyn or Mavis. He would surprise them. He rose to his feet and bowed. "Will you give me the pleasure of this dance?" he said to Margot.

David Boyeur, watching from his table, raised his eyebrows. An idea that he immediately dismissed crossed his mind. The Governor was a widower, but that surely was an impossibility. Even so it was impressive. He watched them as they danced. His Excellency was smiling. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

He was. He had expected that Margot would be tongue-tied and a little coy. He had counted upon a simper. To his surprise, she chattered away naturally: "I did enjoy myself at dinner. I've never been to a party like that before. I didn't know whether I should bow or curtsy. Everyone told me something different. They said I mustn't speak unless I was spoken to, but how could I do that?"

His Excellency chuckled. "Tell me about yourself," he said. "You're a cousin of David Boyeur, I believe."

"A distant one."

"He's a young man for whom I prophesy a very brilliant future. You must be very proud of him."

"That's what he keeps telling us we should be."

Again His Excellency chuckled. That A.D.C. of his had sense. "You work at the Bon Marché pharniacy?"

"For the time being, but I'm a qualified stenographer. I suppose you haven't a place for me?"

That took the great man's breath away. He looked at her quickly, then felt reassured. She was not being impudent; she was simply someone who said as a matter of course whatever was in her mind. It would be fun to have her around.

"I didn't think you'd dance as well as this," she said.

That decided him. He needed some lightness in his routine. A place would be found for her at Government House.

EUAN caught Jocelyn's eye across the table. "Shall we?" his look said; she nodded and they rose together. Their steps fitted well, and there was no lack of common ground for conversation between them. He could talk to her about the Wessex that she had never seen, about the cousins and the aunts whom she knew only by name and about whom she had so many questions to ask.

The music stopped; the Governor looked round the table. It was time for refreshments. He caught Archer's eye; the A.D.C. hurried to the kitchen for champagne.

Archer returned to find Margot by herself. He held his hand out to her. It was the first time they had danced together. He knew nothing about her; at the same time he knew everything, as she did about him. Each knew what was in the other's mind. His heart was pounding. "It would be lovely to make love to you," he said.

She smiled; her smile was an acceptance.

It was as simple as all that.

As the music stopped, Archer once again caught his boss's eye. What was it now? A title for a book crossed his mind: H.E.'s Lackey, or The Unprivate Life of an A.D.C. "Yes, sir?"

"I want to talk to Julian Fleury, but I don't want it to seem that I have especially asked him over; will you invite his wife as well, and the two young people?"

The maneuver was carried out, and the Governor turned at once to Julian. "I wanted you to be the first to know," he said, "that I propose to implement the new constitution right away. There will be three nominated members on the Legislative Council. I want you, my dear fellow, to be one of them. I hope you will accept."

"I'm honored and I'm touched."

"And to show you what a contrary person you are going to find me," the Governor was continuing, "I'll break it to you now that I'm not taking your advice in the Preston case. I am sure you are right in feeling that Preston made a mistake. At the same time I feel justice should be allowed to take its course. And I must confess I'm a little curious to see what course it takes."

MAVIS was sitting next to Grainger.

"Do you mind if we don't dance?" he said. "I'd so much rather talk to you."

She raised her eyebrows. As far as she could remember it was the first time that any man had said that to her. When a man had said he did not feel like dancing, it was the opening gambit for "Let's take a drive somewhere where it's cool."

"We don't have many chances to talk, after all," he said.

She knew what he meant. They could meet only at an occasional intimate picnic or on formal occasions such as this.

"You'd be surprised how often I thought of you when I was in England," he was saying. "You symbolized so many of the things I love best about the islands. Wholesomeness, openness of heart, a natural graciousness that comes to people who've been born to rule. Most people have chips of some kind on their shoulders. The real patrician hasn't."

"Why should I have stood for all that to you?"

"Something about you, the way you looked and spoke. You were so friendly to all those other children. Shall I tell you what saddened me? We could have been friends as children, but when I went back home you would be grown up and we couldn't be." He said it without bitterness. "There's another thing too I used to think," he went on. "We could have been friends in England.

There was even a girl there who would have been very glad to come out here and marry me."

"Why didn't you bring her back?"

"Would that have been fair to her? Think of her position here, never being able to meet people of her own kind on equal terms."

"Were you unhappy over it?"

He shook his head. "I knew from the start it was impossible."

"Did you ever consider marrying her and staying there?"

"Yes, I did consider it. But I felt I had a duty here, to my own people."

He said it quietly, undramatically. This is as fine a person as I've ever met, she thought. And an afterthought sent a glow along her veins: this fine person wanted to talk to her, singled her out for his confidence. She must be something more than the obvious girl whom visiting firemen took for drives in the moonlight.

THE DANCE had become gayer now; groups had split up and reformed. At the Governor's table the supply of champagne had ceased. Euan Templeton was dancing with Mavis. His cheek rested against hers.

Carson stood at the bar beside Maxwell. "What a relief to get back to whisky," he was saying. He put his hand into his hip pocket, brought out his cigarette case and offered Maxwell a cigarette.

The case was divided into two sections, one containing thicker cigarettes. Maxwell hesitated, then took one of them. He read on the thin paper, in gold lettering, *Laurens Alexandria*.

"Do you often smoke Egyptians?" he asked.

"On occasions."

Maxwell's hand trembled as he lit a match. Now there was no doubt about it.

It was like no sensation that he had felt before: rage, impotence, horror, sickening apprehension. Carson was the last person he would have expected; the last person he would have it be. What chance did he stand against Carson? He looked desperately round the room.

Sylvia was standing beside that agitator fellow and that pretty

half-caste from the pharmacy. He hurried over. He was blind with misery. He had to get Sylvia home.

"It's time we were going. Let's be on our way." He ignored Margot, ignored Boyeur. He took Sylvia's elbow.

Boyeur clenched his teeth. To be ignored in this way, have no notice taken of him, and in front of Margot. Never had he felt more humiliated. I've a score to settle with Maxwell Fleury, he thought.

BACK in their room at his father's, Maxwell listened as Sylvia chattered brightly about the evening.

"You much prefer it here in Jamestown, don't you?" he said.

"It's more fun."

"You'd like to fall in with my father's plan, and have me take over the town side of things?"

"If it would suit you all right."

It would indeed suit him very well. He could keep track of Carson's movements, lay traps, catch them out in lies. He'd bide his time and when he got the evidence . . . His hands behind his head clasped one another with an angry, exulting promise, as though they were making a pact. When the time came, they would know what to do.

CHAPTER 4

A FEW DAYS later, the Governor received a cable from Wilson Romer: SENDING SANTA MARTA WARD SENIOR REPORTER CARL BRADSHAW LEAVE ABSENCE STOP REST CURE NOT ASSIGNMENT STOP APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.

The Governor chuckled as he handed the cable to Denis.

"This is your pigeon. Show him everything, invite him to dinner here; but bear in mind that everything you say will be cabled back to Baltimore. Behave as though you didn't know it would."

Archer had read many American novels and seen a great many American films, among others *The Front Page*. He knew what to expect of an American journalist. Bradshaw would be untidy, he would wear a battered hat indoors, his pockets would be filled with

packs of cigarettes, he would breakfast off a two-finger shot of bourbon. He would have a way with dames.

Carl Bradshaw was not at all like that. Bald, cherubic, rosy-cheeked, he wore a freshly pressed brown-and-white-striped rayon suit, and spoke in a high-pitched voice, with a Boston accent. A portable typewriter was the only indication of his calling.

He arrived at half past three in the afternoon. "I expect you're thirsty after your trip," said Archer. He had a bottle of Canadian Club whisky in the car.

"I am. I should enjoy a cup of tea at my hotel," was the unexpected answer.

Archer had booked him a room at the Continental. "H.E. wanted to invite you to G.H.," he said, as he drove Bradshaw to the hotel, "but as you are here for a rest cure he thought you might prefer to be on your own. At the same time H.E. very much hopes that you will be able to dine with him tonight; not a large party, half a dozen people whom he thought it would interest you to meet."

"Thank you. I'd enjoy it."

"I'll call for you at a quarter to eight. Black tie."

BACK AT G.H., Archer slowed his pace as he passed the secretariat. He glanced into the room, and saw Margot was alone. They had met several times since the Nurses' Dance, briefly, for snatched moments, drives along the coast, fretted by the knowledge that anyone driving by would recognize his car. He recalled the warning that he had given to young Templeton on the afternoon of that first garden party. It was ironical that he should have been so prescient.

She looked up with a casual smile as he laid a package on her desk. It contained a length of yellow silk that he had bought at the Syrian Bazaar, on the way to the airport. "You might be able to make yourself a dress with this," he said.

"That's very kind of you." She opened a drawer and put the package in it. There was an anthology of modern poetry that he had lent her on her desk.

"What do you make of the poems?" he asked.

"A lot, now you've read them to me first. If you hadn't, I'd have

missed their rhythm. I wish you'd show me some of your own poems."

He hesitated for a moment. He was shy of showing his poems, for he had no idea if they were any good. When Jocelyn had asked to see them, he had shaken his head. He could not have stood the comments she might have made, about not being "educated up to it." Margot was different. She had the direct vision of a primitive painter; he would like to know what she thought about them.

"I'll bring some in tomorrow. When are we going to meet again?"

"You are the busy one."

It was said uncoquettishly. She was never coy; her directness was one of her chief attractions for him.

"It's maddening, this seeing you and yet not seeing you," he said. He could not see her alone in Government House. He could not take rooms in town.

"I know." She said it simply.

"Do your parents ever go out? Could I see you there?"

"I don't see why not."

"Next time they go out will you let me know?"

"I will."

Her eyes were looking straight into his. No need to pester her with questions. One day she would say "tomorrow."

CARL BRADSHAW's function as New York representative had been to keep the paper in touch with the big city. He contributed, twice a week, a signed column of paragraphs, and to the Sunday supplement a feature article in the form of a full-page diary.

It was work for which he considered himself admirably suited, and it allowed him to lead the kind of life he liked. He was gregarious, he enjoyed the theater, he was interested in personalities. His work gave him a special status. Hostesses liked to think that their activities were being recorded in another city, and authors and playwrights felt they were being given national publicity. He had held his post now for twenty years, and until a year or so ago he had considered himself an example of the happy man.

Recently, however, he had become aware that the *Baltimore Evening Star* was not wholly satisfied with him. Carl Bradshaw

knew what the editors were thinking — that he was growing old, out-of-date, no longer in the swim. His present assignment, he sensed, might not be the sack, but it was the embroidered bag. This was a last chance. He told himself, as he dressed for the Governor's dinner party, that he was not going to lose his job if he could help it. It was within his power to send back from Santa Marta an article, a series of articles, that would show those young fools in Baltimore that he still knew a story when he saw one.

It was the first time that Bradshaw had dined at Government House in a British colony. He was impressed. These Englishmen had something. They had lost their Empire, their coinage was debased, yet they still behaved as though they owned the universe. Lord Templeton's descent of the wide curving staircase was like a film scene. But Hollywood would have botched it. They would have given him some elaborate decoration, a sash across his shirt front; Hollywood would have missed the dignity of that slow descent of one man in a plain white uniform, with four rows of ribbons, concentrating in his person the "might, majesty, dominion and power" of a far-flung Empire.

Carl Bradshaw had one great merit as a reporter: he was a good listener. The easiest way to being considered a social asset and a good talker, he had found, is to make it easy for others to talk well.

At dinner, he glanced at the place card of the lady next to him: *Mrs. Norman*. She was an attractive-looking woman in the middle forties; the kind of woman with whom he felt most at ease.

"I want you to tell me everything about everybody here," he said. "But first of all I want you to tell me all about yourself."

"There's not much to tell."

She had been born here, she said. Her husband was a Barbadian, in Barclay's Bank. She indicated a tall thin balding sandy-colored man across the table.

"Have you any children?"

"Two daughters. Sylvia is married to Maxwell Fleury, the son of the man next to Archdeacon Roberts. Mavis isn't married."

"And is your husband manager of the bank?" he asked.

"Among other things. He's also one of the directors of the St. James Hotel, and head of the Santa Marta Tourist Board. I'd like

him to give up the bank and concentrate on the hotel; I believe there are more tourist possibilities here than we are developing."

She dilated on the special attractions of Santa Marta for tourists while Bradshaw followed his own thoughts. All these islands wanted to cash in on the tourist trade; the rewards were so great. Jamaica, Bermuda, the Virgin Islands had cashed in handsomely. The trouble was to get things started. It was not only that Americans wanted "stateside comfort," hot running water and chilled orange juice; they wanted to meet other Americans when they traveled; on their return they wanted to be able to talk about places that their friends had heard about, to compare notes with Frank and Mary. If you could get six American tourists to Santa Marta, you could get sixty. But how to get those six?

"What do you think, Mr. Bradshaw?"

As she talked an idea had struck him. "I'd advise you to concentrate on a summer season," he said. "Between January and March you're in competition with luxury resorts, and the rich go where the rich are. In July and August you can aim at a different, simpler clientele. The plush people are in Maine or Newport or the South of France, but there is a large group of schoolteachers, students, parents whose children have gone to camp, who want a holiday in the sun. And I understand the climate in those months is very good down here. A summer in the West Indies may be the thing of the future." He spoke with conviction. It sounded feasible. He could see that it had appealed to Mrs. Norman.

"You must tell this to Jim," she said. "You must come round tomorrow evening for a cocktail." It was exactly what he had hoped for. She might prove a useful pipe line to the people and stories he wanted.

There was another contact from whom Bradshaw hoped much: Archdeacon Roberts, whose ironic glance had already caught his across the dinner table. After dinner, Bradshaw sought him out.

"You've been out here twenty years," he said, after a little polite conversation. "Why have you stayed on?"

"Motives are mixed. It may be partly because the climate has made me lazy; or perhaps it's because I have a suspicion that if I went back to England I should find myself out of touch with my

old friends. But I should like to believe that I have stayed on because I felt I could do good here."

He paused. "These people are good at heart; lovable, gay, good-natured. But they have no roots. Their lives are drab. They need badly what the church can give them: the pageant of its ritual, the majesty of its language, its reminder of values beyond their own."

Gradually Bradshaw worked the conversation round to the island's more general problems. "You probably see more than anyone," he said. "The people relax with you. Would you say there was any danger here of Communism?"

The Archdeacon shook his head. "They've not reached that stage yet. There's the usual conflict of the haves and the have-nots, but they are very backward; they have stayed backward because the intelligent ones go to the larger islands, Jamaica and Trinidad, and to British Guiana; that's where you'll find Communism, where there are highly intelligent, educated men who feel that they can't advance because of the inequalities of the social system under which they live. Communism isn't a problem here; it may be in twenty years, but it isn't now. The Party is too busy organizing its cells in Trinidad, Jamaica and B.G. to worry about Santa Marta."

This information disappointed Bradshaw. He had thought there might be an article on the Communist menace presented by British West Indians who were coming up to the States.

"What would you say then was *the* issue here?" he asked.

"Color, my dear fellow, color." A mischievous look came into the Archdeacon's eye; he was a good man, devout, sincere, but he had a leavening, humanizing share of malice.

"For three hundred years," he said, "Europeans have been settling in these islands. There has been marriage and intermarriage and every variety of irregular alliance. Nobody can be sure of his precise ancestry. How many Englishmen know the maiden name of their mother's maternal grandmother? We all carry in our veins blood of whose nature we have no suspicion. In England that does not matter, since our skins are white; but here where skins are brown it's a different matter. In Haiti, before the French Revolution, Moreau St. Méry drew up some two hundred different classifications of mixed blood. That spirit still persists. The man with an

eighth mixture considers himself the superior of the man with a quarter; though the man who's completely African thinks himself the superior of the man of mixed blood. But the pure white and pure African among the educated classes are the exception."

Bradshaw listened attentively. He was onto something now.

"It would amuse you," the Archdeacon was continuing, "to know the trouble to which these patrician families put themselves to conceal what everybody knows." The Archdeacon chuckled. "Old parish records are most illuminating," he went on. "I have a taste for research, and I derive much entertainment from tracing the genealogies of our leading families. When I visit other islands, I continue my research there. Several members of my congregation would be astonished by the information I possess about them."

"I'm having cocktails with the Normans tomorrow. Will you be there?" Bradshaw said. He was enjoying the Archdeacon.

"One of the advantages of my calling is that I have an excuse for not attending cocktail parties. I consider them one of the most barbarous inventions of our day. Evensong is sung in the Cathedral every evening at six o'clock. If ever you need an alibi, my dear fellow, there it is."

MRS. NORMAN was discussing her cocktail party's composition with Mavis. "We'd better ask Euan," she said.

Mavis thought of the excitement she knew she stirred in Euan, an excitement to which she in part responded. She felt depressed; the same routine again, so soon after the last. She shook her head. "Euan sees quite enough of us."

Her mother was surprised but made no comment. They must have had a tiff.

"It's no good suggesting Grainger Morris, is it?"

"Well, darling, after all —"

"I know, I know. What about Colonel Carson?"

The Colonel was, in a way, an odd man out. He was too old for the younger set, yet as a divorced man he did not fit into the adult married group. Though he had an estate which he was working with success, he chose to live in town, driving out every morning. He was neither a planter nor a townsman. He had no intimates. He

was a dark horse, and Santa Marta was on its guard against dark horses.

"Yes," Mrs. Norman said, "there's always Colonel Carson."

At lunch she mentioned the matter to her husband. "He's always at the Club. You could ask him when you see him there today."

"I could," Norman said hesitantly.

But when he arrived, and saw Carson leaning against the bar, Norman was tempted to pass on down the veranda. Carson was by himself; that was one of the things about him that put people off. He was self-sufficient, often preferring his own company to his fellow members'. Why should Norman bother to ask to his house a man who was clearly so well satisfied with his own company? But you never knew what people were thinking under their façades. Maybe the man was shy.

Carson seemed to be on the point of leaving. Norman walked across to him. "We're having a few people in for drinks this evening, to meet this American journalist, Carl Bradshaw. We'd be delighted if you could join us."

"I'd love to. Thanks a lot." Carson tossed off the rest of his drink. "Must be on my way. I'll be seeing you this evening."

CARSON lived within five minutes' walk of the Club, behind the police station. It was the quietest place in Jamestown, and he had chosen it for that very reason. He had been delighted when he found this small brick eighteenth-century house, within fifty yards of a main road, but in a cul-de-sac, screened from prying eyes by a cemetery on one side and the blank wall of the prison on the other. No one could even see his front door.

He never made any set plans for the evening; sometimes he would go to a chop-suey; sometimes he would miss dinner altogether. His houseboy left him a buffet meal and went home early.

He switched on the light in his sitting room and winced. How dreary it all looked! What they had called a man's den in Edwardian novels: a roll-top desk, a table with magazines, bookshelves that were mainly empty, pictures of school and regimental groups. How different from that other room in England, with its bowls of flowers, its crisp chintzes and firelight flickering upon old china and

polished rosewood! How long was it ago? Twelve, fourteen, fifteen years. Sometimes it seemed to be yesterday, sometimes it seemed to belong to another century, to a life upon another planet.

He poured into his glass a two-finger peg of whisky; filled it three quarter way with soda. He was restless and did not feel like sitting down. He paused in front of a framed school photograph of a cricket side. It had been taken his last week at Marlborough, the year before he went to Sandhurst.

Beside the Marlborough picture was a regimental group: thirty officers, taken outside the mess, three years before the war. They were just home from India. He'd been engaged three weeks; he was to be married in October. How good life had been! The green fresh fields of England after the arid Indian plains, and Daphne . . . What crazy good luck to have found Daphne; Daphne, who was such good company, sat a horse so well, shared all his tastes.

Should he have been warned by the easiness with which it went? He had been so dizzily in love, it was so much the once-in-a-life-time miracle for him, that he had never doubted it had not been the same for her. And perhaps it had been too, at first.

Her father had bought them a house in Devonshire. Daphne had in her own right half again as much money as his own small private income. For a few years, they decided they would incur no responsibilities. A family could wait. They could do every amusing thing they wanted, throw a gay party, dash over to Le Touquet. He did not know what he had done to deserve such luck.

His glass was empty and he refilled it. This was the last. He had some accounts to go over. He must keep his mind clear for them. As he paced the room, he looked about him with disfavor. Once again there rose agonizingly before his eyes the memory of Daphne's flower-filled drawing room as he had seen it last in the spring of 1940.

He had been posted in March to Malta, and sent home on a week's final leave. It had been a bitter winter of cold and snow, but the fires had been banked high at Taviton. Their hearts had been light; the phony war was on, Italy was still neutral. Daphne would come out soon and join him in Malta. All the same, since they might be separated for some time, it might not be a bad idea for them to start that family they had been postponing.

That final leave had been a second honeymoon. They had felt utterly at peace, very much one person as they had sat on that last evening before the fire. They'd call it Hilary, boy or girl, they had agreed. Hilary was a girl's name too. How little he had guessed that that was the last evening he would spend at Taviton, that he would never again sit with Daphne before a fire.

It was all a very commonplace, familiar story, he supposed. There had been that first letter beginning, "Too sad, darling, but no little Hilary. Plenty of time though, isn't there?" Then there had been a spate of letters, sometimes two a day, that he tried in vain to sort into their proper order. Soon the letters had become less frequent, less ecstatic, but that after all was only natural. So had his too. You could not live on that high plane forever. The war became suddenly intense. The fall of France, his own posting to the Western Desert, to take command of a territorial battalion. Finally there had been El Alamein, with the wounds that had kept him in hospital for seven months. When he was convalescent there had come, out of the blue, that letter starting, "Dearest, this is the hardest letter I have ever had to write."

He had never seen her again. The divorce had taken place through the usual channels. By the time he had got home, she was in South Africa and Taviton was sold. It might have been easier if he had seen her again, with her new husband, when she was no longer in love with him. Then he could have consoled himself with the thought: the Daphne that I knew has vanished. But nothing had come to shatter the picture of that earlier Daphne, of their three years' marriage. He still felt married to that Daphne.

His glass was half empty now; high time to eat. He went into the kitchen and made a sandwich. What a way to dine, for a man who was used to the ritual of a mess. He looked at the clock: quarter past eight; early yet. Plenty of time to get down to that stack of figures. Come on, he told himself, back to the other room, Carson.

He returned to his study, went to his desk, hesitated. He turned back to the decanter. Those figures could wait until tomorrow. . . .

To his relief and very considerably to his surprise, Carson woke the next morning, as the room was lightening, without a

headache and in fine fettle. He drove out fast, in the best of spirits.

It was as well he did. He arrived to find confusion. Outside the estate house, which manager, was a group of chattering, gibbering like a monkey house. "What is all this about

There was a twittering silence. Fingers bungalow. He stared and understood. The man on the veranda was spattered with white feathers. The grass round the steps leading to the veranda was a semicircle of white feathers. An Obeah spell had been placed upon the house.

"How did this come about?" he asked.

There was a movement at the back of the group and his manager's wife was pushed forward to the front. She was a tall, handsome young woman, who was always laughing; today she was bowed, she seemed to have shrunk into half her height. Her face was shapeless with crying. He could scarcely hear what she said. Her husband interpolated explanations.

At last Carson was able to discover what had happened. Her six-year-old niece was visiting them. The girl had gone swimming with a village child. They had gone out too far and the villager's daughter had been drowned. The mother blamed the manager and his wife. They ought not to have allowed the children to go swimming. She had gone to the Obeah man and he had put this curse upon the house.

Carson's face grew grave. This, he knew, was serious. The peasants believed in their Obeah man. Something must be done, and quickly, or there'd be idle hands on the estate for weeks. He thought fast, and an idea came to him. "Now listen, all of you," he said. "The woman whose child is dead is angry. I will see her. I will give her money. I want no one in the village to be angry."

He spoke slowly. He used short and simple words. He had listened to the Archdeacon's sermons and had noted, for his own use, his avoidance of long words and his repetition of essential phrases.

"The woman has suffered; she is sad and she is angry; but why is she angry against John and Helen? Are they to blame? How can they be blamed? It was not Helen's sister's child who led this woman's

daughter to the
daughter of Helen at
Helen at
woman

That final lie sea. Helen's sister's child is younger than was the utterly at this woman. It is the elder one who is the leader. last eve and John are not to blame. This house is not to blame. The they an is angry. She takes her anger to the Obeah man. Was it right of her to do that? No, it was not right. No blame lies upon John and Helen, no blame lies upon this house."

He paused. He looked around him. The peasants' faces wore a rapt, mesmerized expression.

"The woman is angry and she wishes to bring harm upon John and Helen. She wants to bring harm upon this house. She goes to the Obeah man. Is that right of her? No, it is not right. Was it right of him to have placed a spell upon John and Helen, who have done no wrong? No, it was not right. Was it right of him to place a spell upon this house that had done no wrong? No, it was not right. But though it was not right, he has laid the spell; upon John and Helen, and upon this house. What are we to do?"

The silence was complete. He had got them where he wanted.

"A spell has been laid," he said, "and it must be broken. It must be broken because it was wrong to lay it. It must be broken and I will break it. The Obeah man is wise, but I am wiser. The Obeah man knows many spells, but I know more spells. My spells are more powerful than his spells. I have traveled far, where wise men know many spells. They taught me their magic. The spell must be broken. I will break it. You wait, all of you."

He kept a dispensary in the bungalow. He took from it a hypodermic, an ampule, disinfectant, cotton wool. He held up the hypodermic. A gasp went up. The hypodermic had great prestige value among the peasants. It was the new magic of the atomic age. The villagers felt proud when they could say on their return from hospital that they had had injections. They felt cheated when they were given medicine.

"The spell has been laid upon this house. I am the owner of the house, but John is the master of the house. I will kill the spell that has been laid on John. Then there will be no spell upon this house and no spell upon Helen."

He was standing now upon the veranda. He filed off the cap of the ampule, filled the syringe and laid it on the table.



"John, come here."

He wheeled forward a divan. He was resolved to make a parade of the occasion. The peasants were used to injections in the arm; he was going to make this one intramuscular.

"Slip down your trousers and lie upon your stomach."

A ripple of interest ran along the crowd. Not many of them had seen an intramuscular. He held up the hypodermic. "I am going to drive this two inches into John's seat, but he will feel no pain."

He rubbed disinfectant on the spot. It felt like rubbing leather. He prayed that the needle would not break. He struck. The needle quivered but stood firm. He emptied the syringe slowly.

"That's all," he said, then gave the other cheek a slap.

The slap removed the tension. A laugh went up.

"Did it hurt?" he asked.

John shook his head. He was a tall, stalwart fellow in his later twenties. Thirty minutes ago he had been scowling; now a great grin lit his features.

Carson faced the crowd. "The spell is broken."

He walked down the steps, picked up two handfuls of feathers and tossed them over his shoulder; then he turned to Helen. She had shed her woebegone expression. She looked quite pretty. How quickly these people went from one extreme to another!

"That Obeah man said he would make John sick. I will prove to you how sick he is." He took her above the elbow and his eyes twinkled. "How long have you been married?"

"Two years, sah."

Carson grinned. He broke into patois. "John *bien bon au cabane?*" Had he said it in English, she would have been embarrassed, but said in patois it delighted her. She flung back her head and gave a cackling laugh; the others joined her.

"I'll wager you are not too bad yourself," said Carson.

She covered her face in her hands and turned away in simulated coyness, giggling behind her hands.

"Now you listen carefully, Helen," he went on. "Tonight you leave John alone. My spell will be fighting with Obeah man's spell. You sleep in another room. And tomorrow, you sleep in another room. John will be tired after the fight between the two spells;

very, very tired. But the next night, Saturday, you go to him. Then you tell all this folk on Sunday whether he's sick or not. Now back to work, the lot of you."

CARSON returned to town that afternoon to the Normans' party in the highest spirits. He was glad that the American would be there. It was a story that a journalist would appreciate.

Bradshaw listened with appropriate interest.

"What was in the ampule? Don't tell me you injected water?"

"Heavens no, I injected hormones, and that young fellow likes his wife. That Obeah man's going to be the laughingstock of the whole neighborhood. He won't monkey around again with my people in a hurry."

Bradshaw chuckled. "We hear a lot about Haitian Voodooism. I hadn't realized how far-spread it was."

Carson corrected him.

"Voodoo and Obeah are two separate things. I'd describe Obeah as necromancy, the art of the witch doctor. But Voodoo is a religion. It came straight from Africa. It's genuine, in its way."

"Would you say Obeah was all quackery?"

"Not at all. Those boys know their stuff. They know the local herbs. And that was our own medicine, after all, five hundred years ago. They can poison you if they want to; they can cure some ailments, too."

"And there's the power of suggestion."

"There's very much the power of suggestion. I don't disbelieve those stories of sticking pins into clay models. Doesn't modern medicine prove that the witch doctors are nearer to the truth than the family doctor fifty years ago? Aren't they proving that half our illnesses are mental?"

"Won't that Obeah man try to get his revenge on you?"

"If I worried about things like that I wouldn't get much sleep."

To that there was no answer. But it gave Bradshaw a slight shiver down his spine to reflect that at this moment, sitting on his haunches in some hut under the palm trees, was a man endowed with curious and uncalculated powers who in three days' time would have only one desire, to be revenged on the white man

who had made him an object of ridicule to his neighborhood. He looked thoughtfully at Carson. In his different way this man might prove as useful as the Archdeacon.

"You like your laborers, don't you, on the whole," he said.

"One can't help liking them. At least I can't. They're comics, they make me laugh, though they drive me mad at times. They have such capacity for enjoyment. You'll have a chance of seeing that at Carnival."

"When is that?"

"The two days before Ash Wednesday. Three weeks from now. Trinidad is supposed to be the place to see it, but in Trinidad the Carnival's too organized for my taste, too commercial. It's more intimate in a small place like this. You musta' miss it."

"There's something else I've been told not to miss; the case a planter is bringing about some cattle. Will you be going to it?"

"I expect so."

"Could I go with you? I'd enjoy it much more if I had someone to tell me who was who."

"I'll be delighted."

CHAPTER 5

THE MORNING of the Preston case it seemed as if half of Jamestown would be at the trial. Carnival was only a few days distant, and tension was already mounting; shops were filled with costumes and the children had started to run in packs with their faces painted. Steel bands, their crude instruments fashioned from discarded oil barrels, were beginning to parade the town.

The courthouse, an adjunct of the police station, was a square, thick, fortlike building. It was here that the Legislative Council sat. Cool and whitewashed, the courtroom inside it had a sense of dignity, with its dais and dark benches and gilt-framed portraits of eighteenth-century Governors. As the seats by the door began to fill, there settled on the room the kind of hush that steals upon a theater as the musicians take their places in the orchestra. Dark faces peered through courtroom windows; from the boughs of the

mango in the courtyard, and from the broad high wall round it, urchins were gazing into the dark cool room.

Carson pointed out the local notables to Bradshaw, sitting beside him. "That's Grainger Morris, the lawyer, over there," he said. He provided a succinct biography. "You ought to know him. I'll make sure you meet each other. And — ah, here is Preston." He introduced the two men.

"My case isn't the first," Preston said. "There's one before mine that needs a jury, some typically ridiculous situation about a man biting off his sister's finger."

Carson turned to Bradshaw. "There's copy for you, old boy."

MAVIS was sitting beside Sylvia Fleury and just behind Grainger Morris. "On whose side are you?" she asked him.

"I'm afraid I'm not figuring in the *cause célèbre*. I came down in case any of these poor devils need counsel."

"Isn't that a waste of time?"

"Not if it's in someone's service."

If anyone else had said a thing like that she would have felt it sanctimonious, but he said it naturally. There was no one like him, she thought; no one, no one. It was the first time she had seen him in an advocate's wig. The tight white curls made him look ten years older, they gave him an air of distinction, of authority. If her father had put on a wig and gown would anyone have seen the difference?

A fist thumped upon a desk. A voice announced, "His Honor!" There was a shuffle as the attendance rose, and the judge walked slowly to his seat upon the dais. He was a short, squat man, three quarters colored, with an air of considerable dignity.

Carson bent across to Bradshaw. "Say what you will, the British Empire is remarkable; here's the descendant of a slave, sitting in judgment on his captors — and without any revolution. It's something you can't shrug away."

"Silence in the court!"

The prisoner had been brought into the dock. He was a thin, weak-looking Negro who might have been thirty or sixty. He looked about him with a furtive air as the charge against him was

read out. He had bitten off the top joint of the fourth finger of his half sister's left hand.

"Has this man any counsel?" the judge asked.

Grainger rose. "I shall be glad to offer my services if the prisoner agrees."

The judge turned to the prisoner. "Mr. Morris, a distinguished member of the bar, is offering you his services, at no cost. This is an act of great generosity. I presume that you will accept."

The prisoner looked at the judge vaguely. Carson leaned across to Bradshaw. "I hasn't a clue, poor fellow."

Eventually the twelve jurors were chosen, and the prosecution opened its case. The first witness was Leisching, the Austrian doctor, who said in a strong German accent when asked his opinion:

"The woman told me that her brother had bitten her. The condition of the wound was consistent with her story."

With other witnesses, the rest of the story unfolded. It was a sordid miserable account of a series of quarrels between brother and sister, culminating in a knockdown fight.

Mavis followed Grainger's cross-examination with breathless wonder and interest. It was not so much his cleverness that moved her --- she had known that he would be clever --- as his gentleness, his patience, his fairness. In the course of his cross examination of Dr. Leisching, he forced the Austrian to admit that a person of the prisoner's frail physique could have inflicted the injury in question only during an access of extraordinary power, such as an epileptic seizure. Subsequent testimony revealed the fact that the man was, indeed, subject to fits.

But despite Grainger's best efforts he was defeated by the prisoner himself, who burst into a wild tale of self-pity and self-vindication. It tore Grainger's defense to shreds, and Mavis saw him exchange with the judge a glance of amused despair. There was nothing that he could do now but present to the jury a plea for mercy. He did it quietly, undramatically: "Life is very different in these small shacks, in back streets, from what it is in the pleasant bungalows in which you live. My client has confessed to a ruthless, brutal act. But I think you would be justified in attaching a plea of mercy to your verdict."

But he did not get his plea of mercy; the prisoner was too well known to members of the jury. A verdict of guilty was brought in, and the judge asked to see the prisoner's record. There were three previous convictions: two for theft, one for robbery with violence. He received nine months.

After lunch the body of the court was again crowded. Denis Archer had been sent down by the Governor, and Euan had come with him. Bradshaw was sitting two rows behind the Prestons; now for the *cause célèbre*, he told himself. On an occasion such as this he made use of a hearing aid, and he was able to overhear the advice that Mrs. Preston gave her husband:

"Don't be diffident, and don't get flustered. Tell your story in a straightforward way. Even if the judge won't give you justice, you'll have made it very clear to these people that you won't be trampled on."

Preston was placed in what had been the witness box in the previous case. His neighbor Montez stood in the dock, in a tight-fitting blue suit, a stiff white collar and a bright yellow-and-blue American tie. He was represented by counsel and had brought down ten witnesses from his estate, who stood against the wall in restless anticipation.

The judge consulted his papers, then turned to Preston. "Are you represented by counsel?"

"No, sir."

"I see. Usually an appeal turns upon a technicality, and you would be well advised to consult with counsel." He looked at Grainger and Grainger nodded back. "As I thought. Mr. Morris, who is a very talented member of the bar, would be glad to give you the benefit of his special knowledge."

Preston hesitated. He looked toward his wife. She shook her head emphatically.

"I'm sorry, sir. It's very generous of Mr. Morris, but I would prefer to handle it my own way."

"Very good."

Mrs. Preston turned to Mrs. Norman. "A white man is perfectly capable of making his own case. We can't have these local lawyers fixing our cases between themselves." It was said in a stage whisper,

loud enough for everyone in the body of the court to hear. Mavis flushed. Grainger could not have helped hearing. She was so angry that she could scarcely follow the conduct of the case.

As the judge had prophesied, it turned upon a technicality. The judge was satisfied that Preston had acted in good faith, and had made every effort to discover how much damage had been done. He could appreciate Mr. Preston's fears that this kind of thing might become a racket, but according to the evidence at the previous trial there was an admitted trespass, and the commission of a trespass assumed damage.

"But I didn't attend the trial. I do not accept that evidence," Preston protested.

"In that case your appeal should have taken a different form."

It binged, so it seemed to Mavis, on a verbal quibble. She could not be bothered to listen to it. She was following her own thoughts. They were angry, rebellious thoughts about the Mrs. Prestons of Santa Marta, snug and complacent and superior, thinking themselves a heaven-appointed aristocracy, for no other reason than that their skin was white.

"As you were not represented by counsel," the judge was concluding, "I have allowed you greater freedom of expression than I should have done. Much of what I have let you say could not have been admitted in this court as evidence. And I have been at particular pains to explain why I have reached my opinion, that the magistrate's decision must be allowed to stand."

He spoke quietly, with an air of dignity and authority. He was a colored man, Mavis told herself; there was not a single white man in the smaller islands with sufficient brains and enterprise to be entrusted with such a post.

"But, my lord, I do entreat you . . ." The intensity in the voice broke her reverie. The neighbor's counsel was on his feet. He was asking for costs and the judge had refused him costs. "But, my lord, there are counsel's and legal costs. Ten witnesses have been brought from the estate."

"There was no need for them to have been brought. They gave their evidence before the magistrate. That evidence is on record."

A smile was flickering in the corners of the judge's mouth. He

knew his people. Whether or not a deliberate racket had been plotted, whether the fence had been removed and Preston's cattle driven in to trespass at a point where no damage could be done, he knew very well that Montez had resolved to take all possible profit from it. And he had thought the appeal, which he was certain to win, provided an excellent opportunity to bring ten of his hands into town for a day's festivity. Montez must not get away with that.

"There will be no costs. There was no reason for their having been incurred," the judge decided.

The decision filled the Country Club section of the audience with jubilation. Montez must have promised his witnesses a reward. Though he had been awarded fifteen dollars for damage to his property, he would be substantially out of pocket.

In the street, afterward, there was a clamor of indignation from Montez' witnesses. They were insisting that he had promised them five dollars each. He was arguing that the promise had been dependent on his obtaining costs.

"You never said that, boss."

"I did not say it, but I meant it. How can I give you money I have not received?"

Boyeur listened in the background. The estate hands were members of his union. He let them talk; he always let them talk; while they were talking, he made up his mind. He could turn this to his own advantage. He waited for a while, then interrupted.

"Listen, boys, you've had an unlucky deal, all of you. You were promised five dollars and you should have had it. You feel that you've been humbugged; naturally."

"He said five dollars. He must pay five dollars."

Boyeur raised his hand. "Let's look at it like this. A colonel says to his men during a war, 'We are going to take that town. We will plunder it. There is much money in the bank, much jewelry, much silver in the houses. When we divide the spoils, each man will receive a hundred dollars.' That is what he says. But suppose the town has been warned; suppose the money, the silver and the jewelry have been sent away. What to do? The colonel cannot give them a hundred dollars each. They have deserved it, but he has

not got it. He cannot give them what he has not got. What to do?"

Boyeur paused. He was following the same technique that Carson had, a few days earlier. If you went on talking, using one phrase as a refrain, you mesmerized your audience.

"What to do? There is only one thing to do. The colonel makes a pile of what he has captured and divides it equally among his men. That is fair, that is just, that is all he can do. That is what you do now. How much money has the judge awarded? Fifteen dollars. There are ten of you. There is also Montez. Montez has suffered damage. He has also to pay his lawyer. It is fair that he should have the biggest share. What to do? I say five dollars to Montez, one dollar to each of you."

He looked round him. They were not yet wholly satisfied, but they were feeling better than they had.

"One dollar is not as good as five," Boyeur continued. "But you have had a day in town. You have seen your friends. It has been a party. If someone had said to you two weeks ago, 'I drive you into town, you see your friends, you drink mountain dew, I give you a dollar to spend,' you would have been delighted, wouldn't you?"

They agreed that they would have been delighted.

"Montez has done you no injury. He has done the best he can. At the same time you have been humbugged. When you go back tonight, they will laugh at you in the village. Your girls will say, 'Where is that handkerchief? Where is that scent you promised me?' You will look silly. And whose fault is it that you will look silly? Not Montez'. He did his best for you. Shall I tell you whose fault it is? Come close, I whisper."

They gathered round him and he dropped his voice.

"It is a white man's plot, to make the brown man look silly. Have you heard that Preston is going to manage Belfontaine for Maxwell Fleury? It is Maxwell Fleury who wanted to make you look silly, so that the village should be afraid of the white man. It was Maxwell Fleury who made Preston bring this case. It is not Preston's fault. He is a little man. Maxwell Fleury is a big man. It is Maxwell Fleury's fault. You have been made to look silly because of him."

The argument, Boyeur knew it well, had no basis of truth what-

soever, but they would not recognize that. In their present mesmerized state they would believe anything.

"Shall I tell you what I do when a man makes me look silly? I wait my time and then I fix him good."

Across the street stood Maxwell Fleury talking to his wife and sister-in-law. He looked very handsome and at ease, laughing and chattering with a smug self-satisfied expression. I'll teach you to ignore me in public, Boyeur thought.

SMUG was the word that had occurred to Boyeur looking at Maxwell across the street. Smug was the word that occurred to Mavis, as Maxwell gloated over the outcome of the case.

"It's the best thing that could have happened," he was saying. "It'll show these peasants their place."

Mavis disliked his manner. It did not amuse her that an ignorant, ill-educated colored man had been discomfited. The appeal should never have been allowed to come into court. They were children, these people; they should be treated as children were: firmly when the occasion warranted, but kindly, with forbearance. It was an atmosphere of enmity that made possible a remark like Mrs. Preston's. Mavis was still incensed over that. She watched for Grainger. The moment she saw him in the doorway, she hurried over.

"I want to apologize, on behalf of all of us, for what Mrs. Preston said. I felt hurt on your account; but ashamed on mine. I felt humiliated that such a thing could be said." The words poured out; she was overwhelmed with a need to make atonement for the intolerance, narrowness and injustice of her world. "We are not all like that," she said. "I'm not the only one who is disgusted by that kind of talk, that way of thinking."

"I know."

"And it's because you know that that you're so different: you haven't any chip on your shoulder. We can be natural with you. You don't know how hard it is for us to be natural with the others, some of the others."

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"I can guess that."

"We don't blame them. It's our fault, not theirs, because of what we did in the past, even in the present — people like Mrs. Preston.

We don't blame your people for being difficult. But can't you see what a relief it is to have some like yourself, of whom we can say, 'Is there one point on which he isn't the equal of any man we know?'"

She paused, breathless, flushed. She had never talked in this way in her life. She had become a new person to herself. Was she making herself ridiculous? She didn't care. "I think you're wonderful," she said.

He did not answer. He held out his hand. It was a firm cool handclasp, more eloquent than any verbal answer. She watched him as he mounted his bicycle and rode off. Something had been said that could never be unsaid now, that was a part of them forever. She felt reborn.

And it was at that very moment that a hand took her arm above her elbow and a voice whispered, "What about a drive?"

She turned and there was Euan Templeton. There was a hot look in his eyes; his thumb moved against the soft flesh of her upper arm. That touch, that look symbolized everything in her past that she despised, that this new found self of hers rejected. She pulled herself away.

"Leave me alone!"

It happened so quickly that only two people saw it. But they were the two people to whom the seeing of it mattered most: Carl Bradshaw and Jocelyn Fleury. To each of them, in a very different way, it had a special meaning.

From the other side of the street Denis Archer was waving to Euan. "Want a lift? I promised your old man to hurry back."

"O.K."

"That's exactly what the old man wanted," Archer said as they drove. "Nobody really won, the magistrate's face is saved, and there's a general feeling everywhere that it doesn't pay to bring one's grievances to court."

Euan made no comment. Huddled in the corner of the car, he looked away from Archer. What's biting him? Archer thought. He dropped Euan at the front door, then drove round to the garage. He looked into the secretariat. Two dark heads were bent over their desks. Margot was not alone; there was no real point in his

going in, but the impulse to be near her was insistent. He had an excuse: they would want to know about the case.

They listened with interest and amusement to his recital.

"Serves Montez right," said the other girl.

Margot made no comment. There was an air about her that he had come to connect with the harboring of inner thoughts. He looked at her interrogatively.

"I reread your poem," she said. "I'm beginning to understand it. But there were four lines I didn't get."

"Which ones?"

"These."

She slipped a sheet of paper in the machine and began to type. He stood behind her shoulder, and watched the lines appear upon the sheet. She tapped three spaces, then a line of dots, then the words, "My parents will be away tonight."

She pulled out the sheet. "There," she said, and handed it to him. There was no change in her voice, no change in her expression. The other girl, seated three yards away, could have no inkling that anything unusual had transpired.

AFTER BREAKFAST the next morning, the Governor sent for his A.D.C. Before getting into the day's work, he gave Archer a close look.

"Are you feeling all right, Denis?"

"Yes, thank you, sir."

"You don't look as though you did. You look ---" His Excellency paused. "I don't know how a person looks after a shot of cocaine, but I imagine he'd look much as you do now."

Archer laughed. For that in point of fact was how he felt. He was in a trance and knew it. For ten days he had been thinking, if only he could have Margot to himself for a whole evening he could make her really his. Now that a whole evening lay behind him, an evening that had been more of a dream than he had dared to dream, he had the exciting but disconcerting knowledge that, whether she was his or not, he very certainly was hers.

From His Excellency's study he went straight to the secretariat. The two girls looked up. He addressed the other one.

"H.E. wants to dictate a draft. Could you go along to him right away?"

As the door closed behind her, he crossed to Margot's desk. Her eyes were watching him. Was there a fonder look in them? He did not know. There seemed a closer one. I must keep this light, he thought. I mustn't be intense.

He sat on her desk, picked up her hand, turned it over in his. He wanted to make her a long speech; but this was not the time for speeches.

"I'm going to write a poem," he said. "It'll be a very good poem. People will say it must have been a very wonderful girl who inspired it."

"Do that," she said.

BRADSHAW's first article from Santa Marta reached Baltimore forty-eight hours later. The foreign-news editor whistled as he read it. "The old man had better see this."

Romer raised his eyebrows as he scanned the story. He hadn't realized Bradshaw had it in him.

"What about this bit about the Governor's son?" the foreign-news editor said.

Romer reread it. The incident between Mavis and Euan outside the courthouse had been quoted as an example of the electric atmosphere beneath the surface in Santa Marta. It was not strictly necessary to the article. Romer hesitated. No. News was News. He had been the Governor's guest, but you had to abuse hospitality on occasion. Your host, unless he was an idiot, recognized that fact. "Let it stand," he said. "And send Carl a cable of congratulations."

Ten hours later a copy of that cable lay on the Governor's desk.

At one point in his military career, Lord Templeton had been employed in Intelligence. He had learned there the routine of security checks. There was no mail censorship in Santa Marta, but he had methods of his own of keeping a check on cables. Romer's cable to Bradshaw interested him. He cabled a friend in New York asking him to send down every copy of the *Baltimore Evening Star* that carried an article signed Carl Bradshaw.

A FEW DAYS later, the Governor convened the Legislative Council to proclaim the new constitution, with its provisions for universal suffrage and nine elected Council members to three appointed by the Governor. He announced the date of the elections.

"This constitution," he concluded, "gives you considerable powers of self-government, but not total self-government. Certain powers are retained by the Governor. I have the right of veto. I can dismiss a minister. I can even suspend the constitution. But I would remind you that I am the Throne's representative. I am responsible to the Throne, and through the Throne I am answerable to Parliament. You have the right to petition the Throne against my administration.

"I must remind you also that Santa Marta is not yet a self-governing Dominion; it is a crown colony, subject to the privileges and obligations that a crown colony enjoys. I have no doubt, however, that in a very short while the British West Indies will be federated in one self-governing Dominion, and in that Dominion Santa Marta will play a significant and valuable part."

He drove back to Government House with his Guard of Honor. Sunlight poured in mild amber radiance onto the yellow and green shutters of the houses, the dull red brick of the old French buildings of Jamestown. The town square was crowded with old and young, all in their brightest clothes; the women with handkerchiefs knotted in their hair, some wearing the long traditional French skirt; the boys in blue jeans and bright beach shirts. His heart warmed at the sight of the crowd. They did not cheer, that was not their way, but they were here on his account. On a morning such as this, it was hard to believe that there was such a thing as trouble in the world.

A large official mail awaited him at Government House. There was also a copy of the *Baltimore Evening Star*. He turned to Bradshaw's article.

"I Sit on a Volcano." That was the heading across double columns. "I sit on a volcano," the story ran, "one of the peaks of a now submerged range of mountains that curved in prehistoric days in a semicircle from the tip of Florida to Venezuela. Socially, politically, I also sit on a very live volcano here on the charming

British West Indian island of Santa Marta. I can hear its rumblings beneath me. Sooner or later there must be an explosion.

"The trail for it will be laid next Thursday, when the Governor of the island, His Excellency, Major General the Lord Templeton, drives down in state to the Legislative Council to announce a new constitution for the island. By this new constitution, power will pass out of the hands of what the Governor of another island called 'The Sugar Barons' into the hands of a few colored politicians, who will be able to exploit a credulous, inflammable proletariat that has no political education. It is idle to call this democracy.

"Consider the financial position of Santa Marta. . . ." Carl Bradshaw had studied this. The island was entirely dependent on its three main crops of sugar, copra, cocoa, and its economy was tightly linked with that of Britain. "The island is not genuinely self-supporting. Income tax, which is by American standards cripplingly high, and customs duties, which are also high, pay for its administration, but the money that supports the various welfare schemes comes out of the British treasury. In time of war the West Indian islands are an asset to Britain, but in time of peace they are a liability. Do its new leaders realize this? Does David Boyeur, for example?"

There followed a pen picture of David Boyeur. "Boyeur is in his own field all-powerful. He can organize a strike, and Santa Marta cannot afford a strike. The price of sugar must be kept to a level at which it can enter the world market side by side with sugar not only from Barbados, Santa Lucia and St. Kitts but from Mauritius and Ceylon and Cuba. Boyeur has promised his followers he will raise their wages another five percent. Will he have the sense that is ingrained in every practicing politician of being able to go back on his promise once he is in power? Boyeur is young and vain. Has he learned how to eat his words, without loss of face? A great deal depends on that. . . .

"There is a final point, a most important one: the climate.

"At first glance the West Indian climate seems ideal. There is no winter, no torrid heat; there are no diseases; malaria is under control; the trade wind blows throughout the year. The vacationist flying south from our frostbound northern streets considers Santa

Marta a terrestrial paradise. 'Is it like this all the year round?' he asks in amazement. The answer is, yes, it is. For fifty-two weeks, one day is like another. There is rain most days, sun every day. One day is like another, too like another.

"This constancy of climate gets upon people's nerves; it drives them to do things that in a cool climate they would never do. Tempers are frayed. Men lose self-control."

Then he described Mavis' behavior to Euan after the trial. "Would you expect such a girl to behave like that in England?"

At the reference to his son, the Governor started, but he finished the article, then turned to an editorial headed: "Trouble in the Caribbean."

"On page 15 we print a highly significant article from Carl Bradshaw, who is now vacationing in Santa Marta. Some readers may think that the small British colony is no concern of ours. But the Caribbean lies at our back door; problems already await us in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Anarchy near there is a menace to our own security."

THERE WAS a lunch party of forty guests that morning at Government House, for the retiring members of the Council, their wives and a few head officials. Euan, also present, certainly looked happy enough, his father thought. No sign of a broken heart.

"Have you made any plans for Carnival?" the Governor asked.

"We thought we'd see what it's like in the smaller villages. I'll be with Jocelyn, Mavis and Doris."

It didn't look as though the scene outside the courthouse had broken up the family atmosphere of The Inseparables.

"That's a good idea," the Governor said. "Mardi gras is something not to miss, from all that I've been told."

He had also been told that there was a danger of trouble during Carnival. It was the last fling before the long Lenten calm. The natives would be drinking fierce, illicitly brewed rum for a week on end. With everyone "running mask" there were easy opportunities for the paying off of old scores behind the anonymity of a Carnival disguise. In some of the islands, the precaution had been taken of insisting that all masks be removed by six o'clock. But

there had been no real trouble on Santa Marta lately: only a few broken crowns, a few car tires slashed.

Across the room, he saw Carl Bradshaw. He walked across to him. "I hope you're finding your holiday a relief from the strain of writing your articles."

"Thank you. I'm glad to say that I am."

Templeton chuckled inwardly. Bradshaw clearly had no idea that his article had found its way to the Governor. He did not intend to let him know. During his service in Military Intelligence, Templeton had learned to let a suspect run free through the bazaars, if one could watch his movements. One day he might find it convenient to administer a rude shock to Master Bradshaw. But in the meantime it was intriguing to wait and wonder what future rabbits Bradshaw would pull out of his hat.

A LARGE number of Santa Martans had relatives in the United States and the same plane that brought the *Baltimore Evening Star* to Government House carried clippings of Bradshaw's article to the offices of the island's daily paper, *The Voice of Santa Marta*.

The editor, Marcel Tourneur, a colored man with a strong sense of mischief, read it. He whistled. This was too good to be true. His first impulse was to print it right away; but he had the same detective's instinct that the Governor had. Let your prey run wild a little, don't let him know he is being watched. Much better for Bradshaw not to know that his articles had found their way back to Santa Marta. He placed the clipping in a drawer to which he had a key.

CHAPTER 6

THE SUN on the morning of Mardi gras rose into a cloudless sky. Jocelyn, seated in her window beside her morning tea, looked forward to the day with mingled anticipation and anxiety. It was the first picnic since the scene outside the courthouse. Mavis and Euan had not avoided each other since then; there had been no sign of friction; but they had met only at large gatherings. It would be different today, in a small party, on their own. As a safeguard against unpleasantness she had arranged a

larger party than usual: twelve of them instead of six. Since Sylvia and Maxwell were in town, they had three cars. If things got difficult, they could break up into small groups.

They met at ten at the Continental. From the veranda Bradshaw watched them arrange themselves in three sets of four. Young Templeton did not get into the same car with Mavis. Did that mean that the quarrel was still on? He saw Jocelyn get into a car with some Barbadians who had come over for the Carnival; Mavis, Doris and Doris' brother joined up with Grainger Morris.

The world was a good place, Mavis thought as she drove at Grainger's side. It was a perfect day; the air was so clear that she could see, shadowy on the horizon across sixty miles of water, the outline of Guadeloupe.

They passed through a straggling village, every shack hung with bright flags. There was scarcely a villager who was not "running mask." They paraded in groups, in couples, alone. From the porches of the shacks that lined the road old men and women yelled encouragement, children jigged up and down on the edge of the road. On the veranda of the police station, a ten-piece steel band was beating out its jagged rhythm. The main street was so crowded that the car was forced to slow down till it was scarcely moving. A powerful, pervading smell of brilliantine and coconut oil overlaid a smell of sweat.

Mavis thought of the bloodshed in Santa Marta's history. After Emancipation, when the landlords were no longer responsible for their workers' health and comfort, there had been poverty and unemployment and native uprisings. The great-grandparents of these men, Mavis thought, must have looked very much like this as they pranced round burning plantation houses, waving their cutlasses. They were happy now, these people; but they were out of control.

THE PICNIC rendezvous was a beach on the north point of the island, where they could be sure of solitude. Hot and tired when they arrived, they plunged at once into the cool fresh water, then sat on the sand under the palms and drank punches out of thermos flasks. After the first two punches, most of them went back to swim

again before opening their lunch baskets. Each had brought something different: there was lobster mayonnaise, there was "soursop," chilled in a wide-necked flask; there was rabbit pie and sponge roll and cheese. Mangoes were not yet in season, but there was a papaw and a pineapple. They overate a little, as one does at picnics. After lunch they stretched themselves on rugs, so tired that even the sand flies could not stop them sleeping.

The heat of the day was over when Euan woke. The sun was sinking toward the hill. Another three quarters of an hour and the beach would be in shadow. He saw that Jocelyn too had waked; the others would be waking soon. That meant more punches. He could dispense with that.

"Is Belfontaine far from here?" he asked.

"Three miles."

"I've never seen it properly. Could you show me round?"

"I'd love to."

They looked at their slumbering friends. "Will they be driving past the house on the way back?" he asked.

"They may be, but it's a longer way."

"It doesn't matter, though, we've got three cars."

It was the first time she had been beside him the whole day, the first time they had been alone for at least a week. But as always she felt cozily at ease with him. And it was good, after the noise of Carnival, to be driving in the quiet, past a grove of coconuts, toward the foothills.

"I can see why your ancestors chose this place," he said, when they reached Belfontaine. It looked very dignified, white against the green of the cane fields, with the avenue of palms leading to it from the road.

Jocelyn honked the horn as she turned into the avenue. "I'll bet that wretched guardian has taken the day off," she prophesied.

The windows were shuttered and the front door locked. No sound came from the outbuildings. "What did I tell you? They're the most casual people. You can't rely on them. Luckily, I know where they keep the key: in a flowerpot on the veranda." She parked the car to the left of the drive, out of sight of the house, in the shadow of a mango tree.

A ten-year-old urchin, who had been squatting on the edge of the cane field since midday, noted its position with approval. He slunk back to the main road, keeping out of view. The moment he was out of sight he began to run. Perhaps the man who had sent him here would give him fifty cents. He was one of those whom Boyeur had exhorted to "fix Maxwell Fleury good."

IT WAS less than thirty hours since Maxwell and Sylvia had driven into town, but already the shuttered house carried a damp smell. Jocelyn wrinkled her nose. "Do you wonder that nothing lasts here? Worms eat through books and furniture. It's not worth having a good piano. They eat the felt. Let's let in some fresh air, quick."

They moved from room to room, opening windows. Sunlight streamed through onto rosewood and mahogany, silver and Venetian glass, onto family portraits in dull gilt frames. From the windows you saw the fresh green of the cane fields and the cotton crop.

In what had been her father's study the walls were hung with photographs. "That's Grandfather," she said.

It had been taken on the steps of the house in Devonshire that Euan had known so well in boyhood. "It's funny to think that you've never been in that house," he said.

He looked more closely at the photograph. Her grandfather was wearing a Norfolk jacket, with a handkerchief tucked sideways into the long pleat; he had a gun under his arm. He was wearing boots. There was a spaniel at his feet.

"I've got a photograph of my grandfather looking just like that," he said.

"And that's Mummy," she said, pointing.

"She's the image of your Aunt Cicely."

"It's strange your knowing all these relatives I've never met."

"That's what I told you at that first garden party."

They reached the final photograph. "Haven't you one of your father's mother?" he asked.

"Daddy's got a snap somewhere. You can't see her at all well. She's wearing a floppy hat, and her face is in the shadow."

"He was born out here, wasn't he?"

"Not on this island, in Jamaica."

They returned to the veranda. The shadow of the palms had lengthened, the blue of the sky had darkened. There was not a cloud on the horizon. They stood side by side on the veranda, leaning against the railing.

"We may see the green ray tonight," she said.

"The others ought to be coming by now any moment."

"Unless they've gone the other way."

"We don't need to feel guilty about them, do we?"

"They'll be all right."

It was very quiet. The nearest village was two miles away. The beating of the steel drums carried faintly against the wash of the waves upon the shingle, the rustle of the palm fronds.

"I'll make some tea," she said. "Sylvia has an electric kettle. We'll switch on the current."

The electric plant was housed in a stone cistern fifty yards away and connected with the house by an outside wire. Jocelyn pulled a handle gently, but no answering throb came from the cistern. She pulled again. There was no response.

"It keeps going wrong. We'll have to use the stove," she said.

They brought the tea and some biscuits onto the veranda. "They won't be coming now," Euan said.

"No, not now."

"I'm glad they won't. I want to see that emerald ray."

They had not long to wait. The sun grew redder as it dipped. A tip touched the horizon; a quarter, then a half.

"Be careful not to blink," she warned him.

He wanted desperately to blink. The sun dried his eyeballs. Three quarters under now. He blinked fast, twice. Then he stared, fascinated. He had heard so much of the emerald ray, a last flash of vivid green as the sun submerged; but this was the first time he had had a clear chance to see it. He stared, resolved not to blink; the sun had almost vanished. One moment it was there and his eyes were smarting; another moment and it was gone and he was blinking hard.

"Well?" she asked.

He laughed. "It was a blur. But I'll say I saw it."

"That's what most people do."

He looked back at the horizon. It was very lovely; the air was

cooler now; a breeze was blowing from the mountains; the white flower of the night was opening, spreading its sweet heavy scent. Stars began to stud the sky.

"What time does the moon rise?" he asked.

"It's three quarters full. It should be coming over the mountain in about an hour."

"Let's wait a little. It'd be nice driving back by moonlight."

They moved the tea things into the kitchen, fastened back the shutters, closed the windows, locked the doors opening onto the veranda. The road was unlighted except on the outskirts of each village. It was not exactly dark. The moon mounting on the leeward coast was heralding its approach behind the mountains, but it was dark enough for them not to be able to see each other's features. Conversation became difficult.

"Perhaps we should be going back after all," he said. "We might stop on the way and have some supper."

"That's an idea."

They walked down the short flight of steps into the avenue. The steps were narrow and they were very close. She got into the driver's seat.

"Would you rather I drove?" he asked.

"It's Maxwell's car. I know its idiosyncracies."

She pressed the starter. There was no response.

"I suppose that's one of them," he said.

"You wait. It's got plenty of others."

She pressed the starter again. Again there was no response. She waited, and tried twice more. "This time it's got me puzzled."

"I hope you've got a torch," he said.

"I have."

He lifted up the hood, and flashed the torch. "Well, well," he said, and let the hood down. "I hate to break it to you, but your carburetor's gone."

"What?"

"Your car, lady, has no carburetor. Come and look."

She got out of the car and peered. "You're right, it's gone."

"Is that a Carnival idea of humor?"

"You could call it that. Let's ring up my father."

They walked back to the house. He took the key out of the flowerpot, and opened the main door. "You're better at machines than I am."

She spun the handle, lifted the receiver, stood with it against her ear. There was a minute's silence. She hung the receiver back, swung the handle, stood again with the receiver against her ear. Silence again.

"It's no good. It's dead." She paused thoughtfully. "The electric-light engine, the carburetor, now the telephone. Three things can't be a coincidence."

"What does it mean?"

"It might mean anything. Grudges get paid off at Carnival."

"Against you, or me, or my father?"

"They don't know it's me. They don't know it's us. They only know it's Maxwell's car. He may have put their backs up."

"What do we do now?" he asked. "The others must have taken the other road. They won't start worrying about us for hours yet."

"Not till tomorrow morning."

The moon had risen over the shoulder of the hill. Three quarters full, its soft cool light burnished the palm fronds. Now they could see each other's expressions.

"I'm beginning to enjoy this," he said.

They went out to the veranda and sat back in long chairs. How happy I always am with him, she thought.

"How much longer have you got here?" she asked.

"I'm supposed to have four months: I don't go up to Oxford till October. But I've been rather wondering . . ."

The sentence was never finished. Right in front of them, and along the cane field, sprang shafts of fire that rose and roared, fanned by the wind, crackling, sweeping up the hill, tossing their sparks into the sky.

For a moment they stared transfixed, then simultaneously they jumped to their feet and ran to the veranda rail. They stood there side by side, dazzled by the utter beauty of the sight; the orange and red flames, the clouds of smoke with the moonlight silvering their fringes, the dark back cloth of the sky, the flickering glare upon the palm trees.



"Somebody's got it in for your brother right enough," he said. "Better stand back. The sparks are flying."

But she did not move. "That's the only danger," she said, "that one of the sparks might set the house on fire."

"How far does the cane go?" he asked.

"For half a mile, but the stream below will stop it."

"Then it'll turn south. How far do the fields go that way?"

"For a mile or two, but there may be a field that's plowed up."

"We ought to cut an avenue that the flames can't jump across."

He asked her a succession of quick, practical questions. What chance was there of getting any of the villagers? Were there bicycles? He wouldn't want to leave her here alone, but perhaps they shouldn't leave the house unguarded. Though it was surrounded by a drive and garden, there was the danger of a spark landing on the veranda.

"The villagers will probably see the fire, won't they? If they do, they're bound to come and see what's happening."

She laughed. "They'll know about it right enough. You've heard of coconut wireless? They'll soon be flocking round from everywhere."

"We might as well wait for them."

Euan was conscious of an excitement mounting along his veins and nerves: there was the incredible beauty of the raging fire against the tropic night, and the spice of danger was intensified by his sharing of it with this girl. His arm was round her waist. He was watching and listening for the villagers' arrival, one part of his mind praying that they would hurry, the other half praying that they would delay.

The fire was now roaring up the hill, and turning southward; immediately in front of them it had burned low. Jocelyn's face in profile below his was soft and glowing.

Suddenly she started. "Look, they're here," she cried.

In the avenue there was a horde of villagers: thirty, forty, he could not tell how many. They looked fantastically barbaric in their Carnival costumes, with the glare of the conflagration on their painted, glistening faces. More seemed to be coming every moment: boys, women, girls. The men were carrying cutlasses.

"We must get this organized," he said.

He became in an instant the officer he had been until six weeks ago, taking control, giving orders confidently, knowing they would be obeyed; finding the leaders, splitting up the villagers into teams, giving them their instructions. "Come on now, all of you, let's get to work," he shouted.

She was seeing a new side of him: the officer, the practical efficient leader.

WITHIN an hour the fire had been controlled; on the edge of a plowed field a quarter of a mile down the road the cane had been cut back and cleared. The fire could not spread; it would burn itself out. Immediately in front of the house stretched a smoldering, blackened mass. There was nothing more to be done. The villagers were grouped before the steps.

"I had better give them some money," he said. "How much, twenty dollars?"

"Ten's ample."

The villagers were delighted; the whole adventure was a footnote to Carnival. They cheered, shouted, waved their cutlasses, and dispersed as quickly as they had come, hurrying back to their steel bands. Once again he was standing beside Jocelyn, leaning against the veranda rail. He was exhilarated by the evening's drama, but it had been hard work. He had started to feel very hungry.

"I'm not surprised. It's after nine," she said. "You go and shower while I raid the kitchen. If you could only see yourself!"

"Am I very filthy?"

"I can't think what you would be like if there was a light to see you by."

He cleaned himself by the light of a candle, then followed her into the basement. She set out a pile of plates and glasses on the kitchen table. "You move these up, while I shower."

He set them out in the dining room. There were candlesticks with hurricane glass covers. Jocelyn had chosen some of the better glass and china.

"What about the wine?" he called.

"I've unlocked the cellar door. You choose."

He returned with a bottle of Burgundy to find her in the dining room. She had changed into Chinese pajamas. The high neck with its severe line suited her.

"It makes you look sixteen," he said.

"Daddy gave it to me for my sixteenth birthday. I always keep a few things of my own out here."

While he had been in the cellar, she had rearranged the table; it looked quite different. "This doesn't feel like a picnic at all," he said. "It's like a banquet."

"It's rather an occasion, isn't it?"

She had found a chicken pie, some cheese, some salad and fruit. A quarter of an hour earlier he had been ravenous, but now his appetite had left him.

"Will the fire have done much harm?" he asked her.

"Not to us. We're insured. Most months there's a fire on one or another of the estates."

"Doesn't it worry you living in a place where something like this can happen at any moment?"

"One gets used to it. One knows it's going to happen one day, like a hurricane. You have to accept things here."

She leaned forward across the table to take an orange; the long loose sleeves of her Chinese jacket fell back over her elbows. Her arms looked very white and soft against the stiff black silk. Her cheeks in the candlelight were smooth and rounded with the bloom of fruit on them.

"You were born within twenty miles of me," he said. "It's strange that we should have led such different lives. But for mere chance, we'd have been brought up together. Yet even so, meeting you here now for the first time, I've got the feeling that I've known you all my life."

"I'm glad you feel that. That's how I've felt too."

She smiled; no one had smiled at him in quite that way before.

The grandfather clock began to strike. Nine, ten, eleven. "I suppose we ought to clear away," he said.

"Don't bother, this isn't England. Matilda will be here at day-break — or at least she should be."

They rose and faced each other. "It's late," she said.

"It's very late."

He was vividly, acutely conscious of her nearness, in this empty house, remembering how they had stood side by side against the veranda railing, with the fire raging a hundred yards away.

He took a step toward her and she moved to meet him. His arms went round her. He put his hand under her chin; he lifted her face to his.

It all seemed the most natural, the most inevitable thing that had ever happened.

THE NEXT morning, Euan awoke to the sight of a maid at his bedside with a cup of tea.

"Half past seven. Breakfast be ready eight o'clock," she said. He blinked; for a second he did not know where he was; then he remembered.

"Miss Jocelyn awake?" he asked.

"Sure, yes, Miss Jocelyn dressed."

When he walked out on the veranda, she was seated in a long rocking chair, her foot against the railing.

"Hullo," he called.

She turned and a shock of delight passed along his nerves. He had never believed anybody could look as beautiful as she did. She pointed to the smoldering cane field.

"They made a job of that all right."

They had indeed. It stretched for half a mile along the road and for a hundred yards up the hill, a sodden, blackened ruin.

"I suppose the telephone's not working yet."

She shook her head.

"I've sent one of the boys in to the police station. I told them not to hurry out, but I didn't want to have anyone worrying at home."

Ten hours ago, she thought, we were sitting here over our picnic supper, talking about little casual things, intimately but not seriously. Anybody who had seen us then and were to see us now would not recognize any difference in us, would not guess that everything is different now, that we've been transformed.

MAXWELL and Sylvia drove out to fetch them, bringing a mechanic with them. On the surface Maxwell was very calm, but beneath the surface Euan could recognize the bubbling of temper.

"You can see what's happened. It's plain, isn't it," he said. "They had a grudge against me. That shows the kind of people that they are. And to think that they are going to be allowed equality with us. Ridiculous, ridiculous."

He spoke with a sneer. Sylvia made no comment. She stood aside, a look of indifference on her face. It relieved Jocelyn that Maxwell should be so completely concerned with the destruction to his property. He had no interest in the other aspect of the matter, that his sister had spent an entire night alone with a man in an empty house.

Her mother was on the doorstep in Jamestown awaiting them. "What's happened? Was there a great deal of damage?"

That clearly was the angle by which everyone in Jamestown would be affected. A rising on an estate was part of the West Indian tradition: for three hundred years there had been that constant fear in the hearts of the white planters. They were outnumbered fifty to one. Resentment was always smoldering. Gossip would concentrate on the car, the fields, the cut wire. The fact that she and Euan had been there together all night was incidental.

THE NEXT evening Euan called for Jocelyn in a car.

"Where are we going?" she asked as he drove up the hill. She had told her family that they were going to the cinema. "It looks as though you were going to G.H."

"I am." He drove through the main gates. There were no lights in the lower rooms. "The old man's dining with the Attorney General," he said. He parked the car in the garage. "Out we get. There's a side door here."

It opened onto a long dark passage at the end of which was a glow of light. He slipped his arm through hers. "Straight up. Don't make a noise."

She tiptoed up a flight of uncarpeted wooden stairs. It was like the nursery game "I spy." Her heart was beating fast.

The stairway branched. "To the left," he said. There was a short flight of seven steps leading to a door. "I'll go ahead. You wait."

He looked both ways, then beckoned her on to the wide thickly carpeted gallery that led round the center hall. "To the right."

The door was already open. She slipped quickly through, into what seemed a small study. A door beside a desk led into a bedroom.

"This is where I live," he said. "It's the Governor's private quarters. Completely shut away; that stairway's never used."

She had been excited, but frightened, too, as she tiptoed up the stairs. Now she felt reassured; it was cozy here.

The moon rose slowly, filling the room with twilight. As they sat together, she laid his head against her shoulder, her hand stroking his hair. She had never guessed that there could exist a happiness like this. She hated to disturb their trancelike rapture.

"I mustn't stay out too long," she said finally.

"It's only half past ten."

"But the cinema's just ending; the family thinks I am there."

"I know the plot of the film, in case they mention it." He outlined the story; it sounded very silly.

"So that's how it ends up, does it?"

"It's the way most films end, with people getting married. Where are we going to get married, by the way, here or in England?"

She smiled. She had half expected this. A man who had compromised a girl felt himself bound to mention marriage. And the girl had an obligation, too: unless she was quite sure that the proposal was serious, she must shrug it off. On both sides face was saved.

"If we were married here," he was saying, "we'd have two marriages. There'd be the ceremony in Jamestown, then there'd be all the parties for us when we got back home."

He was being very nice about it. The proposal was not a serious one, but it was said in a way that made it seem it was. It was up to her to fulfill her side of the bargain. "Darling, let's not talk of it," she said. "Never again."

"But what am I to tell my father?"

"Your father?"

"I've already told him we're half engaged."

"You've what?"

"Told him that we're half engaged, that I was in love with you, that I thought you were with me."

"What did he say?"

"That if he'd been told on my christening day that his son would one day marry the daughter of two such trusted friends, he couldn't have wished a happier fate for me."

"He said that, did he?"

"He said a good deal more. Shall I tell you some of it?"

"No, please don't. It's quite impossible, you know."

"That's the last thing it is."

His voice was confident and masterly. He was serious, there was no doubt of that. For a moment she let that dream picture flicker before her eyes. It was not true. It could not be. It was too like her schoolgirl dreams of marrying a duke or a foreign prince. She and Euan had separate destinies.

She temporized. "It's not sixty hours since that picnic. Don't you think it's very silly to let the events of a single night upset the plans of a whole lifetime?"

"Shall I tell you what I think? Yesterday morning, as we drove back into town, I told myself that if I lost you now my whole life would be empty."

His voice had lost its bantering tone. His cheek still lay against her shoulder.

"You don't know what my life's been," he said. "Can you realize how alone I've been since my mother's death? Can't you see how someone brought up like that builds a defensive covering for himself, goes behind a screen? That's what happened to me. I lived behind reserves. Now the barrier is down. I'm a new person; the person that I've become now can't exist without you."

She could not trust herself to speak. In all her girlhood dreams, there had been the dream of hearing such words spoken, of finding herself adored and needed by someone whom she could revere and love. She continued to stroke his hair while she recovered control over her voice.

"Whatever happens, never forget this, never. You'll never be

more loved than you are this instant." She said it fondly, tenderly, but her voice was sad.

It wasn't possible. She knew it wasn't, deep in her heart she knew it.

It was close upon two o'clock when he left her outside her parents' house. "I have been accepted, haven't I?" he asked.

She smiled ruefully. "There's nothing I wouldn't give to be able to say yes, but there's one thing. . . . I've got to discuss it with my parents."

SHE CAME down to breakfast the next morning to find the Belfontaine incident being discussed in the light of Maxwell's candidature. "It would be both wise and dignified for him to retire," her father was saying, "but I know he won't."

"Isn't that exactly what they want him to do?" her mother said.

"By no means. If he told them that he didn't care to represent such a group of thugs, some of them would feel humble. But he won't. And because there's been this attack upon his property, he'll say something during his election speeches that will stir up bad feeling. The trouble's only half begun."

Jocelyn listened in silence, waiting for a pause in the conversation. "I've news that may surprise you," she remarked at last. "I'm in love, and I've been proposed to."

"Who by?" her father asked.

"Won't you guess?"

There was a pause. Her father looked puzzled. She knew what he was thinking: that it was Grainger Morris or somebody like Grainger Morris. It wasn't fair to tease him.

"Don't look so alarmed," she said. "It's Euan Templeton."

"Darling, how wonderful!" It was from her mother that the exclamation came. But it was at her father she was looking, watching to see if his expression changed.

"If you are in love with Euan Templeton then it's all plain sailing," her mother was continuing. "I know he's young, but nowadays it's quite common for a married man to go up to Oxford, and Euan isn't perhaps in the same situation as other men — as regards his career, I mean."

Jocelyn waited for a pause; she still watched her father. "Mother's right," she said. "Euan is in a different position. He has a name to carry on; he has duties, obligations. That's why I have to be quite certain. Is there any reason why I shouldn't marry him?"

"What do you mean? What reason could there be?"

It was her mother who spoke, but her eyes were on her father. Did he hesitate or only seem to hesitate?

"Father?" she said. He still stayed silent. So she had been right then. She repeated her question. "Is there any good reason why I shouldn't marry Euan Templeton? Is there any reason why I shouldn't be the mother of his children?"

Her father shook his head. "No," he said. "There's no good reason why you shouldn't marry him."

"In that case then . . ." Jocelyn hesitated. She should, she knew, be feeling jubilant. But her heart was heavy with a vague foreboding.

CHAPTER 7

CARL BRADSHAW's second article in the *Baltimore Evening Star* described the events of Mardi gras. Its main points were cabled back to London by the Reuter service. The editor of the *Globe*, the foremost Opposition paper, read it with interest. He was looking for a whip with which to flog the Government; this seemed as good as any. He called up his news editor. "The line is this," he said. "This Government has appointed as Governor a man without Colonial Office training. Templeton has only been in Santa Marta for five months and for the first time in the island's history they are having trouble. Make a particular point of the fact that the Governor's son was the object of a terrorist attack."

Next day the leader page of the *Globe* lay blue-penciled on the desk of the Minister of State for the Colonies. The Minister read it with a frown, then sent a cable asking the Governor for a report on the matter. The message reached Templeton before the copy of the *Baltimore Evening Star* did.

"I wonder what our journalist has told the world this time," he thought. He sent for Whittingham, and showed him the cable.

"What am I to say to that?" he said.

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Do you think I should be justified in saying that Carnival provides an opportunity for the paying off of grudges, and that this incident means nothing more than that?"

"I believe the whole incident was the paying off of a grudge against young Fleury."

"I haven't yet read the Bradshaw article," the Governor said, "but his point appears to be that there's a general atmosphere of unrest here. You don't agree with that?"

"No, sir."

Neither did Templeton, for that matter. There was an idea nowadays that journalists, by hanging round bars, knew more than ambassadors who received top-secret reports from many confidential sources. He knew more of what went on than Bradshaw.

"Of course, the elections are coming," he went on. "Do you anticipate any trouble then?"

"I shall be very glad when they are over, sir."

THE GOVERNOR and Euan lunched with the Fleurys. It was an engagement party though it had been agreed that there should be no official announcement yet.

"It would be far better for Euan to have at least one term at Oxford," said Lord Templeton. "Jocelyn can come over to England, and they can be married at Christmas."

"And we can stick to our original plan," Julian said, "and sail together in October."

And that, Maxwell thought, left constant the position as regards Belfontaine. He watched his wife. Did she seem relieved? He thought she did. How did he know what was passing behind that smooth calm mask?

"I must be back to my duties," the Governor was saying. "I expect that you'd like to be left here, Euan."

"I think so, Father." He looked at Jocelyn. "What about a swim?"

"I'd like that. Let's have a short siesta, then drive out to Petite Anse. There's a fine long chair on the veranda that you can use."

She was glad to be alone in her room. Her brain was racing. Too much had happened to her, too quickly. She ought to be radiantly happy, but that sense of apprehension still remained.

On the veranda below, Euan Templeton was drowsing, slipping into sleep. He was without a trouble in the world. He would have laughed, incredulously, had he been told that a mile away in a hotel bedroom an article was being tapped upon a typewriter that would shatter the plans that had been made so confidently across his future father-in-law's lunch table.

BRADSHAW's article was headed, "Color Problem in the British West Indies." It began, "Everything here in the last analysis turns on color. It is the subject that everyone avoids, but it is at the back of every social and political issue.

"In the British Isles themselves there is no color or racial problem. The only colored people that the average Briton sees are men of distinction either intellectually or as athletes who come to Britain as 'visiting firemen.' They meet English men and women upon equal terms. Very often they marry English women. In the West Indies, on the other hand, the completely white man is as much an exception as the black man is in Europe. Nearly every family has some trace of colored blood. In most families a dusky aunt or cousin is kept out of sight on the far side of the island. That is the key to island life: everyone has something to conceal. . . ." And examples followed.

The cable editor who read the article in Baltimore raised his eyebrows. He penciled a memo to the news editor: "Surely we can't print this." The news editor also raised his eyebrows, but he sent it without comment to the boss.

Romer read Bradshaw's article quickly. Was there a risk of libel? No, it was not libelous to say that a man living in the West Indies had colored blood. Let the article appear as it had been written.

THE AIRPLANE that brought the copy of the *Baltimore Evening Star* to Santa Marta carried on the Governor and his son to a conference in British Guiana. The copy with Bradshaw's third article was therefore to lie unopened on his desk for half a week. A second

copy, however, reached the offices of *The Voice of Santa Marta*. The editor, already familiar with Bradshaw's first two articles, read with mounting interest; then suddenly he started, just as the editor in Baltimore had done. He stared incredulously at one paragraph. Was it really true? He supposed it must be.

He leaned forward across the desk; he took a sheet of paper; on it he printed in large block capitals, LOOK OUT FOR TOMORROW'S ISSUE. SENSATIONAL ARTICLE BY AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST ON SANTA MARTA'S SOCIALITES. He would print the three articles, one by one.

THE DAILY issue of *The Voice of Santa Marta* did not reach Belfontaine until lunchtime. On the morning that the second article appeared, Maxwell Fleury rehearsed his first speech to his constituents. The temptation to read over the speech to Sylvia had been hard to resist. But he wanted to surprise her. He wanted her to be swept away. At last she would be proud of him.

Their servant brought in the copy of the day's Santa Marta paper. He ran his eye down Carl Bradshaw's account of the Carnival outrage on his property. He was flattered to find himself the central figure of an incident that had been publicized throughout the United States. It should prove to Sylvia that he was not negligible.

In Jamestown, David Boyeur was reading the same article. Its predecessor had given him solid pleasure: it had starred him as one of the foremost personalities of the island. The second article was giving him less pleasure. It contained no reference to himself. There should have been one: it was at his instigation that the Fleury cane fields had been fired. Bradshaw did not know that, but there should have been some reference to his influence. He would have to give the old boy the tip-off. Fleury was making his first speech tonight. If his own plans held, that first meeting should be a meeting to end all meetings. He'd advise Bradshaw to be there.

CARL BRADSHAW drove out alone to Belfontaine. It was a cloudless night and though the moon had not yet risen the road was not really dark. He told the chauffeur to park the car a hundred yards outside the village. He did not want the Fleurys to see it.

The road was empty, but a little farther on he was surprised to hear the din of a steel band. He had been told that steel bands did not play during Lent. The road turned into the square before the police station. On the veranda in front of the building a row of chairs had been arranged behind a trestle table. There was a hurricane lamp at each end of the table. From the room behind, a spotlight shone with blinding brilliance upon the crowd.

There seemed to be several hundred people here, not only the village of Belfontaine but the entire neighborhood. A five-man steel band was beating out a cacophonous calypso; ragged urchins were dancing round it. There was an air of carnival.

The darkness of the road leading away from the square was pierced by the headlights of a car. The car honked and the crowd divided. The car drove through the square and round to the back of the police station. A minute later Maxwell came onto the veranda, with Sylvia at his side and followed by a tall thin man in clerical dress, the parish priest presumably. The priest stepped forward.

"I am here this evening," he said, "as chairman of a meeting in which Mr. Maxwell Fleury, who is offering himself for election as your representative in the Legislative Council, will explain his position to you. As you know, the Church stands aside from politics. At the same time, we are anxious that you should have the best possible opportunities of judging for yourselves who are the men by whom you want to be represented. I ask you to listen carefully to what Maxwell Fleury has to say. Few West Indian families bear a name as honored as his. His father . . ."

There was a silence while the priest was speaking; at the same time there was a great deal of movement in the crowd. At first Bradshaw could not realize what was happening; then he understood. The single spotlight was so strong that anyone standing in its direct glare was dazzled. As a result the crowd was splitting into two separate sections with a bright channel dividing them. It reminded Bradshaw of the pictures he had seen in a Victorian Bible of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea with the waves rising into two walls on either side of them. It would be an awkward audience to address.

"And now," the priest concluded, "I will ask Mr. Fleury to address you."

There was silence when the priest sat down; there was no applause when Maxwell rose. He glanced from one side to the other. He appeared disconcerted by the empty avenue of roadway facing him. He leaned forward, his hands upon the table. "The elections for which I stand before you as a candidate . . ." he began.

The silence was abruptly shattered by the clattering din of the steel band. It was deafening. No voice could have made itself heard above it. Maxwell tried, but the audience was aware only of his mouth opening and closing. Then, as suddenly as it began, the music stopped. Maxwell's voice, breaking into the silence, was like a shrill scream of hysteria. There was a roar of laughter. Maxwell waited for the laughter to stop, then began again. "I stand here as a candidate . . ."

Once again the din of the steel band broke out. This time Maxwell waited. The band went on. He leaned down and whispered to the priest. The priest stood up. There was instant silence.

"This," the priest said, "is a disgraceful exhibition. Mr. Fleury has come here to address you in your own interests. I insist that you listen. Some of you may not want to hear, but others do."

The priest sat down. Maxwell began once more. "I stand before you as a candidate . . ."

A voice called out, "We heard you the second time."

Maxwell started on another tack. "The elections that will take place in a few days are of the greatest importance. Santa Marta is now a self-governing community. It is for you to prove that you are worthy of self-government. It is for you to show the world that you . . ."

This won't do, Bradshaw thought. He ought not to be saying "you"; he ought to be saying "we." They won't like this.

"It is for you to show that you are capable of running this island for yourselves. And how can you do that? There is only one way of doing that, by choosing the right men to govern you."

Bradshaw winced. Oh no, he thought, oh no, no, no. It was all wrong. He'd put their backs up.

"It is for you to find . . ."

The sentence was never finished. The clatter of the steel band burst out again, fierce, barbaric, mandatory. For a minute it continued, then it stopped as abruptly as it had begun. The complete silence following upon the noise was as disconcerting as the interruption. Maxwell hesitated. He had lost the thread of his argument. He began a sentence, abandoned it, stammered, then started on another. "The duty of a Government," he said, "no, I don't quite mean that; the duty of the electors of the Government is as great as the duty of the Government to the electors. You owe it to the Government to choose the right men to . . ."

Once again the sentence remained unfinished. Once again the din of steel broke out, to cease abruptly ninety seconds later, leaving Maxwell again uncertain, hesitant. There was no doubt whatsoever that it was prearranged, and that David Boyeur, if he had not actually planned it, had been in the plot. Where would it end, Bradshaw wondered; had any climax been prepared?

At that moment into the channel of light that divided the two sections of the crowd walked David Boyeur. He stopped in the very center and looked up at Maxwell. He was wearing a white and blue check coat, a bow tie and dark blue trousers. He looked very handsome. His face wore an expression of amused contempt. He laughed, then turned his back on the veranda. He raised his voice.

"This isn't amusing any longer. Let's go." He walked back into the crowd and the crowd started to disperse. There was the shuffle of feet, a purr of voices. Within two minutes there were barely thirty people in the audience. Maxwell glared at them.

"You don't deserve a vote," he said. "I'm going."

He drove back to his house in silence. How differently he had foreseen this hour! He had seen himself returning home in the glow of victory, with Sylvia proud of him, he himself confident and masterful. But these people were impossible. It had been madness to give them the vote, to change the constitution. He'd been a fool to run for the Council. It was only a moment's mood, because of what Carson had said that evening. Carson. Carson! Carson was at the back of everything that had gone wrong with him these last two months.

"I'll tell my father what happened here tonight," he said finally to Sylvia. "When he hears what's happened he'll refuse to serve as one of the nominated members. How could he serve with men who have treated his son like that?"

So he talked: angry, resentful, self-distrustful, on the night when Bradshaw's third article stood in type, on the printing press of *The Voice of Santa Marta*.

The Voice reached Julian Fleury at his office. Ordinarily he did little more than glance at the arrivals-and-departures column. On this morning however, the headline above Bradshaw's third article — on the color problem in Santa Marta — caught his eye.

He read the opening paragraphs with interest; and suddenly he saw his own name. He had read of a sick feeling in the pit of a man's stomach. Now he knew what that meant. He closed his eyes. Pull yourself together, he adjured himself, and take your medicine. He opened his eyes.

"The Fleury family," he read, "provides an example of this mixed situation. The Fleurys are one of the oldest families in the Caribbean. Their estate house at Belfontaine is historic. Its present owner, Julian Fleury, was brought up in England and educated at Eton and at Oxford. The Fleurys are as well known in the West of England as they are in the West Indies. A distinguished Wessex family was delighted when Julian Fleury married their youngest daughter. Presumably they did not know that Julian's mother, who died in childbirth, was a Jamaican, with colored ancestry."

Julian stared at the paragraph. That this should have been brought up after all these years! Betty, Jocelyn, Maxwell — how would they take it? Had they read it yet? He called up his house. Jocelyn answered.

"Is your mother there?"

"She's here. I'll call her."

Betty's voice came on. "Yes, darling?"

"Have you read Bradshaw's article?"

"Yes."

"I'll be right back."

They had read it, had no doubt discussed it. A sense of guilt

bore down on him. It was outrageous that he should have brought this on them. Yet he had brought it in all innocence. He had had no idea of his real background when he came out here. His father had never told him.

Their voices dropped as he came onto the veranda. He looked first at Betty. There was sympathy and fondness in her smile. Jocelyn's face, however, was set and stern; as it would be, naturally.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"It's true."

"And you told me that there was no good reason why I shouldn't marry Euan Templeton."

"I can see no good reason."

"How can you say that? Euan's heir to a title. Can you picture a black man sitting in the House of Lords?"

"There's no need to exaggerate. My mother was three quarters white. I've only one eighth of colored blood; your children will be completely white, all but a minute part."

"What about a throwback?"

"That's an old-fashioned theory. It's been disproved; the blood gets whiter all the time."

"That's what the scientists are saying now, but have they proved it? The risk's too big, in Euan's case. If he were an ordinary person it wouldn't matter, but he's not. His being a peer makes all the difference, even in these democratic days. A colored man in the House of Lords. That fear would poison everything."

She spoke quietly, but accusingly. "Why couldn't you have told me years ago? Then I'd have been on my guard. I've always wondered. One wonders about anyone who's born out here. I've compared photographs of your father and yourself. There's a different cast of feature. I can't see a trace of it in myself, but Maxwell's dark, like you. I've always wondered why there was so little talk about my grandmother. Why wasn't I told? I had a right to know."

Julian Fleury looked toward his wife. Her eyes were sympathetic.

"I never knew it myself till I came out here," he said. "There was nothing to make me suspect. My father toured the West Indies with a cricket team, he fell in love and married. Within eighteen

months he was back in England as a widower; a year later he had married again. My stepmother was a mother to me. Why should I have felt any curiosity about a mother that I'd never seen, about an island that I never heard discussed? Perhaps my father should have told me, but I don't see why he should. I might have been worried by it. He never expected that I'd come out here. He even warned me against coming here."

He did not elaborate the story to them. His mother, he had learned, had belonged to one of those quiet, respectable middle-class families who were educated with care, whose sons worked in government employ. He had always imagined that his father and mother had had the kind of romance that can so easily happen with a visitor to an island; that there had been no talk of marriage till his mother had found that she was pregnant. His father had behaved honorably, but no doubt he had thought of his wife's death in childbirth as a merciful intervention of Providence. How could he have foreseen that sixty years later a situation such as this would arise?

"I don't suppose I ever should have known about it," he said, "if I hadn't met a remote cousin in Antigua."

Betty smiled. "I wasn't certain if you knew."

"So you knew then."

She nodded. "An anonymous letter. I never mentioned it. If you didn't know, it was better that you shouldn't."

Ah, there it went again, thought Jocelyn. Secrecy. Whispers. Anonymous letters. Nothing in the open.

"I didn't think it mattered," her mother added.

Jocelyn stared at her. Not matter, when her own life was being ruined by it?

The maid announced that lunch was ready.

"When does H.E. get back?" her mother asked.

"This afternoon. It will be a nice surprise for him."

"Before you decide on anything . . ."

Jocelyn interrupted her. "Let's lunch," she said.

MAXWELL arrived soon after three, seething with indignation, vowing vengeance.

"We must break this fellow, we must sue him in America. That's where we can get big damages. In America, to call a man colored is to ruin his career. We must sue in Baltimore."

He was on the brink of hysteria. Bradshaw's article exacerbated the humiliation of the previous night. His mother rose, put her hand on Maxwell's arm. "But, darling, it's true," she said.

An expression of incredulous dismay wiped the indignation from his face. He turned to his sister. "How will this affect your engagement?"

"It's the end of that, of course."

"Now wait . . ." It was her mother once again who intervened, but once again she checked. What was on her mind, Jocelyn asked herself? She seemed to be keeping something back. Her brother did not notice the interruption. He was too absorbed in his own predicament. How could he face his friends in the light of this exposure? How they would be chuckling at the Club tonight!

"Did you hear about the scene last night at my meeting?" he asked. "They howled me down. They had a steel band. I couldn't go on. It was a put-up show, organized by Boyeur. He was there himself. He gave himself away, at the very end."

He was hysterical, thought Jocelyn. What had all this to do with a newspaper article announcing that their father had colored blood? There were times when Maxwell was barely sane.

"It was an insult to me. It was an insult to the family. It has to be avenged. We have to prove to these upstarts that we can't be pushed around. I'll tell you how you can prove it, by refusing to sit on the Council with a man like Boyeur."

"Now, my dear boy, do listen to me quietly for one moment." Patiently, slowly, Julian Fleury explained to his son the impossibility of his suggestion. "At the start of any misfortune one thinks that the end of the world has come. But it's only one step in a long journey. The great thing is to do nothing hasty; behave as though nothing extraordinary has happened. If we behave as though a calamity has befallen us, people will say, 'Look at the Fleurys. They don't dare hold up their heads in public.' But if you behave normally, if you show that you do not care, they will say, 'What was it all about after all?'"

"I should, for instance, advise you to go to the Club this evening. Behave quite naturally. Don't avoid people. But don't refer to the article unless someone else does, and you can be very sure they won't. I shan't go to the Club myself; it shouldn't look as though the clan were mustering in force. Behave as though nothing has happened. That's the line."

Maxwell nodded. His father was quite right. He must face the music. He'd control himself. His blood was hot and his mind seething. He longed to be avenged on someone or on something, to get his own back somehow. But he must hold himself in check.

Through the window he saw a plane circling above the town. It was the plane from British Guiana that was bringing back the Governor and his son. Maxwell said exactly what Jocelyn had. "He's got a nice surprise waiting him."

AT THE AIRPORT, Denis Archer was thinking the same thing. How would the old boy take it?

"Any news?" the Governor asked as they drove to G.H. Archer shook his head. He could not tell him, not at least directly.

It was Euan he wanted to see first, to put him on his guard. He found him on the veranda, after Templeton went upstairs for his siesta. "Can you spare me a couple of minutes?"

"Certainly."

He took Euan into his office. "You'd better read this," Archer said.

He watched Euan closely as he read the article. Would it be a great shock to him? How would he take it?

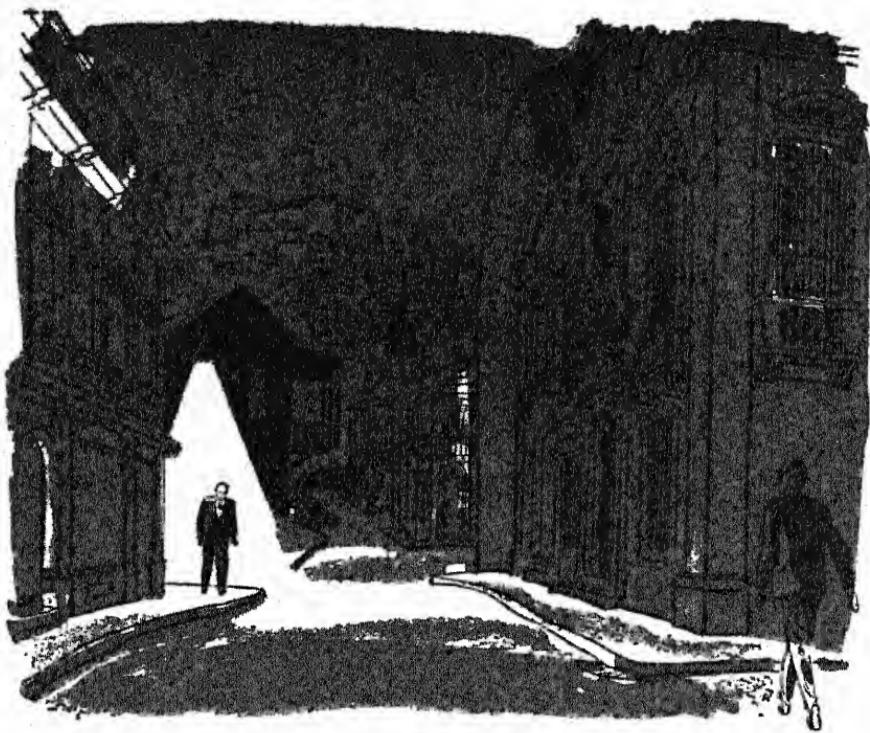
Whatever Euan might be thinking, his face remained impassive. "Thank you for showing it to me," he said. "I'll call Jocelyn right away."

It was Maxwell who answered, however, when he phoned.

"Jocelyn's gone out," he said. "I don't know where."

Euan hesitated. It might be difficult to ring her later. There might be a misunderstanding. He wanted to see, to talk to her. Better to leave a message, to make a date.

"Tell her not to worry. Tell her it's all right," he said. "Tell her that I'll call for her tomorrow and we'll go and swim."



MAXWELL FLEURY was hurrying with angry strides toward the Club. He had delayed his arrival as long as possible. He wanted to reach the Club when it was crowded, to make an entrance. When he came round the corner of the veranda there would be an immediate hushing of every conversation, every head would turn toward him, the same question would occur to everyone at the same moment, "How is he taking it?" He wanted to show them all, in a single flash, that he did not care a damn for any of them, that he was behaving as though nothing at all had happened. He was roused, belligerent, spoiling for action.

He turned into the road that ran past the police station. A block away he saw, in silhouette against a street lamp, a figure walking with a limp. Only one man limped like that. Carson. His temper mounted. Carson, the man who had smoked that cigarette. In the

light of Bradshaw's article he understood Carson's conduct. Carson had known about that Jamaican ancestor. Carson had thought that Sylvia was fair game for a white man. He'd show Carson where he got off. He was in a mood for the settling of accounts. Here was one that he could settle. He waited at the corner of the dark, unlit lane that led to Carson's house.

"There's something I want to say to you," he said, as Carson approached.

Carson had been drinking heavily at the Club. "You do," he said. "Who are you?"

"Maxwell Fleury."

"Are you? So you are. What can I do for you? Not a subscription for the Belfontaine Committee?"

Belfontaine Committee. What was that? thought Maxwell. Then he let the matter pass. "I want to talk to you alone. There's something that needs settling between us."

"Is there? I can't think what. You'd better come inside."

They walked in silence past the blank wall of the police station, turned into the blind alley at whose end stood the entrance to Carson's house. Carson was carrying a torch. He flashed it on, guiding Maxwell's steps over the uneven flagstones. Carson switched on the light in the hall and walked ahead into the sitting room.

The college and regimental groups upon the walls fed Maxwell's anger. What chance did he stand against a man like Carson? In the back of his mind he still admired Carson. Carson was everything that he would like to be himself, everything that he could not be. The extent of his admiration goaded him. Why could not Carson, who had so much, have let him alone? There was a look on the man's face that maddened him: a look of superior indifference. How dared Carson look at him like that?

"You leave my wife alone," he snapped.

"Your wife?" An incredulous, puzzled look came into Carson's face. What was this idiot talking about?

"Yes, my wife. You needn't think that you've fooled me. I've had my eye on you, sneaking round to the house when I'm out, thinking yourself so clever. You weren't clever enough, though, making the place reek with those fancy cigarettes of yours."

"Have you gone mad?"

"Mad. I should say I hadn't. Come to my senses, that's what I've done. I've had enough of this, do you get me? Kindly stop sneaking round my house in future."

Carson's head was throbbing. It was more than he was prepared to stand. He could not be patient with this young maniac. "Are you suggesting that I've been making passes at your wife?"

"I'm not suggesting it, I'm stating it."

"Then you can bloody well unstate it, and apologize to me right now. I never heard such damned impertinence. I'm not the kind of man who chases after married women. I don't share my women."

He was so angry that he could hardly get the words out. Some dirty sneak might have stolen his own wife from him, but he wasn't that kind of a person. That he should try to seduce the wife of a man fifteen years younger than himself! He had never felt so insulted in his life.

"Get this into your dumb skull," he shouted. "I'm not the kind of man who makes passes at the wives of his acquaintances. And even if I were . . . " He paused, searching for something to say that would be really wounding, sought and found it in the memory of that morning's issue of the local paper. "If I were," he said, "I wouldn't be taking the leavings of a man like you, with a tarbrush rubbed across his face."

It was the last coal of fuel on Maxwell's mounting fury. His fist shot out. Carson saw it coming and stepped back; the blow caught him on his cheekbone, with quarter force, but he was off his balance. He staggered and the rug slipped under him; he flung out his arms in an attempt to save himself, but his hand missed the back of the armchair and he fell spread-eagled on the floor, his arms flung wide. Maxwell leaped on him, kneeling across him, pinioning each arm beneath a knee, his hands upon his throat; he lifted Carson's head and banged it on the floor.

Choking, half stunned, Carson through dimming eyes saw glaring down at him a face distorted by hatred. "Tarbrush, I'll teach you; Tarbrush, I'll teach you."

The words, repeated like a chant, beat through Carson's fading consciousness. The fingers were tightening at his throat. He tried to

raise his arms, but he was powerless under the heavy knees; he could not breathe, his chest was bursting, a mist was before his eyes. The face above his blurred. He was conscious of his head being raised. There was a roaring in his ears, through which beat the refrain, "Tarbrush, I'll teach you. Tarbrush, I'll teach you." His head cracked against the floor. There was a roar of cannon, like that night at El Alamein; then silence.

SLOWLY Maxwell came out of his trance. His fingers felt cramped. He stretched them, and the lifeless head fell back. He stared at it. Carson's eyes were open, but they were glazed. Carson was dead. He knew it.

He rose to his feet. His heart was thudding. A man had insulted him and he had killed him. That would show those idiots at the Country Club. They'd thought him a no-account ineffective, the runt of a fine family. He knew what they had said about him: how could such a father have produced such a son? At this very moment, they were talking of his humiliation at the meeting, explaining it in terms of Bradshaw's article. Bad blood will out. They'd be talking out the other side of their mouths tomorrow evening. He could hear the incredulous intonation in their voices. "What, killed Carson, with his own hands, Maxwell Fleury?" They were laughing contemptuously about him now, but tomorrow night . . .

Tomorrow night. Where would he be then? The question sent the first chill shudder along his nerves. He had killed a man. This was not the kind of offense for which you deposited so much bail. This was manslaughter. Or would it be called murder? He could plead self-defense. If only there were some mark upon him, some sign that Carson had tried to pull a weapon. But he did not bear a mark. There was nothing to prove that he had been in a fight. He could walk into the Club and no one would even say, "How did you get that black eye?" Wasn't that how murderers so often got caught, some bruise or scratch that they could not explain? He carried no such clues. In one way that might tell against him, but in another . . .

He knew what he ought to do. Walk round to the police station. But suppose he didn't. . . .

Suppose he didn't. Who would connect him with Carson's death? No one had seen him come here. They had met at the dark turning into this narrow lane. He had left no fingerprints. He had touched nothing. He had come in by a stone-flagged pathway. He had left no footprints. There was no apparent motive for his killing Carson. No one knew about Sylvia and Carson. When Carson's death was announced, no one would connect him with it.

Steady, Maxwell adjured himself, you must think this out.

Suppose that he were to walk straight round now to the Club, and behave there as though nothing had happened. He had only been in Carson's place a quarter of an hour. It was unlikely that anyone at the Club would remember exactly when he arrived. A post-mortem would give a rough idea when Carson had died, but there was no expert surgeon on the island; the precise moment would not be decided. There would be an hour, two hours to play with. There was nothing to connect him with Carson's death. Nothing.

His former mood of exhilaration revived. Did not they always say that the hardest murders to spot were the unpremeditated ones? When a murder was premeditated, the murderer stood to benefit from the victim's death and the police could endlessly cross-examine those who had profited.

Because he had made no plans, thought out no alibi, he had left no clue. If he had meant to murder Carson, he would have thought it out too carefully. He would have had a story that sounded too pat. But as it was, he might very well have committed the perfect crime. Provided no one saw him coming away from the house, he was surely safe. He knelt down and felt for Carson's wallet. It had to look like a burglary. The wallet was in his hip pocket. It was not bulky. He looked inside; it was mostly money. He stuffed the wallet in his pocket. There was a gold watch on Carson's wrist. He took it off and put it with the money. Now, he thought, the sooner he was out of here the better.

I'll walk quickly down the lane, he thought. If I see no one, then I'm safe. If I do see anyone then the game is up. I'll walk straight round to the police station and confess. I'll hand over the watch and wallet. I'll say, "I didn't trust one of you boys not to steal

them." That would be a gesture. He stood in the darkened hall, his hand wrapped in his handkerchief upon the doorknob. He felt like a child playing hide-and-seek.

He opened the door, went down the pathway and turned into the lane. At the end of it he could see the roadway. Could he get there without being seen? He lengthened his stride, without hastening it. He must not attract attention. He reached the dark corner where he had waited for Carson; everything depended on the next three seconds. He stepped into the road and swung toward the right. Now he was on safe ground, provided no one had seen him come out from the lane. No one was ahead of him; was anyone behind? He looked over his shoulder. There was no one there. I'm safe, safe, safe, he told himself.

He walked through the main gates of the Club. The car park was crowded. A big night clearly. He'd have fifty witnesses to testify that he had been there.

He turned onto the veranda. As he did so, he was conscious of a hush, of faces turned in his direction. It was so unexpected that he hesitated, taken off his guard. No one could know yet, surely. Then he remembered. Bradshaw's article. They were all wondering how he would take it. Behave as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, that was the advice that his father had given him. It was precisely the same advice that he had been giving to himself. Two birds with one stone. He'd show them.

He smiled as he walked toward the bar. Bradshaw was standing there. He walked across to him and held out his hand. "Congratulations."

Bradshaw started, surprised. He looked down at Maxwell's hand, hesitated, then put his own into it. It was a flabby handshake. Maxwell's was firm and vigorous.

"That's a fine series of articles. The best things I've read about the island. As for that one today, it certainly was the goods." He paused. He was conscious of a gathering hush behind him and round him. On Bradshaw's face was an expression of complete astonishment.

"You've said things that needed saying," Maxwell went on. "That conspiracy of silence, those great-aunts that are kept out of

sight over the mountains, you've brought it all into the open. You've cleared the air. We shall all be able to meet one another on more straightforward terms. From my own point of view I can't tell you how grateful I am."

"In what way, may I ask?"

"In every way. Up to now, you see—" He paused. He had meant to shrug it off, with some remark about being able to meet his acquaintances on equal terms, but a fresh idea had come to him. "I'll tell you how it'll help me. Aren't I right in thinking that you were at that election meeting of mine last night?"

"As a matter of fact I was."

"It was a fiasco, and I'll tell you why. They didn't trust me. They thought of me as a Fleury, one of the old feudal planters who had bought their ancestors in the market place. They don't want that kind of man to represent them; my standing up before them, appealing to them to vote for me, gave them the opportunity they'd wanted for three hundred years. They had been the slaves of Belfontaine, but now they could reject me. As they did. But it'll be different now, after your article. Now I'll be one of them."

It was only in that moment that the idea had come to him, but in this hour of illumination his mind was moving fast and clearly. "I'll tell you what I propose to do. They think they've scared me off. Far from it. I'll hold another meeting, this time in the daylight. I'm going to take your article as my text. I'll say to them, 'Now you know I am one of you. I combine the new and the old, both races, the black and the white.' I shall explain to them that, though the future here lies with the brown race, they can only achieve their ends by working with the whites; that they should, for a while at any rate, rely upon men like myself who have a foot in both camps. You must come out for the next speech. Perhaps you could have lunch with us before."

"I'd enjoy that," Bradshaw said.

"Fine. I'll ring you up. Will you have a drink? I feel I owe you one."

"Well, thank you, yes. A pony rum and soda."

"A full-size one for me." He ordered the drinks, raised his glass to Bradshaw. "Here's luck and gratitude."

CHAPTER 8

MAXWELL reached his father's house shortly before eight. Jocelyn was home. They were sitting, the three of them, on the veranda; they looked sad and tired. "It's all right," he told them. "I've fixed it. I took the bull by the horns."

With his back against the railing he described the incident. His high spirits were in sharp contrast to his parents' and Jocelyn's despondency, but he could not be bothered about that. "And now," he ended, "I must get back to Belfontaine."

"Won't you have dinner first?"

He shook his head. "No. Thanks very much. Sylvia will be waiting. I rang her from the Club."

He waved his hand, and hurried toward the door. In the hall he paused. That wallet in his pocket. He needed to have a look at it. He turned into the lavatory below the stairs, took it out and opened it. There was a wad of five-dollar notes. They were old and worn; no bank would have a record of them. He put them in his own wallet, and looked into the other compartments. A driving license, membership card to a night club in San Juan, the photograph of a girl: no one he recognized. He wiped them carefully and put them back into the wallet. No thief would bother about those. Then he wiped the wallet with his handkerchief, inside and out, wrapped it in the handkerchief and put it in his pocket with the watch.

His heart was buoyant as he took his seat in the car. It was as though he were rid of some burden that had always oppressed him. The moment he was out of Jamestown he began to sing. The road for a mile or so would be dotted with bungalows, then there would be the cane fields and the coconut plantations that divided the clusters of huts. The sky was clouded; a scud of rain dashed against the windscreen. All the better. Now there were no headlights ahead, none behind. He was in open country.

He slowed down the car, but did not stop it; there must be no sign of a car having stopped along this road. With one hand on the wheel, he took Carson's wallet from his pocket. Using the handkerchief as a sling, he flung it toward the cane fields.

The watch was another matter. Why should anyone who had bothered to steal it throw it away? He put himself in the position of a thief who had been surprised by Carson, and had in a moment of panic taken his accuser's life. Being a thief, he would, before hurrying away, have taken the watch and wallet. But when he began to think, he would realize that the watch was something which he must not keep. It was no use hiding it. He could never use it. Fling it away. That's what the thief would do. He took it out of his pocket, wiped it carefully and flung it wide. The last link with Carson gone. He breathed deeply. That was that. He was safe and free. He began to sing again. He was still singing when he drove up the drive to Belfontaine.

Sylvia was on the veranda reading. As she rose to welcome him, he looked at the clock. It was after half past nine.

"You must be starving," he said.

"I'm not. I've nibbled. How about you?"

"I'm ravenous." He was not, but he felt that he should say he was. He had eaten little all day. As they moved to the dining room, he passed his arm around her waist. How pliant and soft she was! Her hair smelled of jasmine. "It's true," he said, as they sat down. "That story about my grandmother having an African ancestor."

Sylvia made no comment.

"Doesn't it surprise you?"

"No."

"You mean you knew, all the time?"

"I can't quite say; I suppose I did. I . . ."

"Did your parents mention it when we were engaged?"

"I've never heard anyone mention it."

Of course not, no one would. That conspiracy of silence!

"But you yourself, you must have guessed it. It must have made some difference to you."

"No, honestly, it didn't. You see . . ." She hesitated. She wanted to put it, he felt, in a way that would not hurt him. "The point is this: people who have got colored blood, whether it's a little or a lot, fuss about it, they get self-conscious; but to people like myself, who know we're completely white, it's something that seems unimportant." She smiled at him.

"While I, on the other hand, I've not only never known, it never occurred to me to wonder. But perhaps all the time I *have* known, subconsciously. I might have overheard it from a nurse. It may have worked in the dark like a secret poison."

Was this the secret of his moodiness? Had the high drama of this day been like a lancet cutting a hidden abscess? Was that why he had sung in the car driving back, why he had felt himself rid of the burden that had oppressed his boyhood? For the first time in his life he could carry his head high. At last he knew what he was and who he was. He stood square upon his own two feet.

All his life he had been fretted by his hatred of the colored people; he had resented having been put under a colored teacher; he had carried a chip on his shoulder. Might not that have been due to an unconscious knowledge that he had colored blood? Now that he knew the facts he could toss that chip away; he could accept himself for what he was.

"I expect that's what's been wrong with me all along. I've known, but I've refused to admit to myself that I've known." He looked at her thoughtfully across the table. They had sat here alone so often, facing each other, during their year of marriage. This was the first time that they had really talked to each other; there had always been a barrier.

"I must have been very difficult at times," he said.

"I wouldn't say that."

"I would, and I'm sorry. I'll be different now. Everything'll be different now." He had a sense of his whole life starting again, in his new-found confidence. "It's going to make all the difference to my candidature for the Leg. Co. That's what I told Bradshaw tonight." He recounted the conversation.

"That was clever of you," she said. "That will disarm them."

In her voice there was a note that he had never heard before; a note of pride. He had never talked to her like this, she thought. He had been arrogant, boastful, intolerant; now he was confident, self-assured.

"It's getting late," he said. He stood beside her as she rose, and put his arm about her shoulders. "I'm sorry," he said. "You've had a wretched deal. It'll be better now."

Later, when he took her in his arms, there was a new tenderness in his word and touch. Before he had been fierce, tyrannical, insistent. He had revolted her. Now there was devotion, there was worship in his wooing. And Sylvia felt at last the need to give, to respond.

MAXWELL woke with the room filled with daylight. Sylvia was turned toward him. He raised himself upon his elbow. She had never looked lovelier than now, in profile against the pillow. He bent and kissed her. She stirred, opened her eyes, blinked, then smiled a long, slow smile of recognition and remembrance. "Darling," she said.

At last, he thought, at last. It was a peace, a happiness such as he had never known. Then suddenly, shatteringly, he remembered. That body in the room behind the courthouse.

Panic struck him, with a sense of the dramatic irony of his position. Here he was, secure and loved and cherished, for the first time at peace, at the very moment when the structure of that happiness was threatened. His arms tightened about Sylvia's shoulders, desperately. "You're everything I've got. Everything I care about in the world," he said.

Once again she felt herself relax, respond to these new accents in his voice. There was a tap upon the door. The maid with the morning tea. She drew back with a laugh. "Too bad," she said.

"How I wish I were a gentleman of leisure; that I could idle here. Confound these planter's chores," he said.

Those chores began with the half-past-seven roll call at the *boucan*, or smokehouse. In the shade of a ruined aqueduct, he watched his laborers file past as the overseer called their names. There were more than thirty of them, the men with their cutlasses, the women with their baskets; the men in blue jeans, the women with bright blouses, their heads tied round with yellow and red handkerchiefs. For each one he had a word of greeting. In the light of yesterday's knowledge of himself, he felt the stirrings of a kinship with them. If only he had had this knowledge earlier! Had it come too late? Was the evidence already mounting against him in Jamestown?

It was after eight. The news must be out by now. How would it come to him? It wouldn't, it couldn't be in this morning's paper. It would surely be in tomorrow's, but his copy wouldn't reach him until noon.

He rode round the estate, watching the men snipping off the cocoa pods with their long knives, the women piercing them with a stroke of their pointed cutlasses and dropping them off into their baskets. They worked in pairs, husband and wife. He watched a couple squatting down beside their basket, the man cutting open the pods and the woman shelling them. It must be good to share one's work with a woman in that way. A partnership, two people become one person.

He paused at the sheds where the cocoa pods were being trodden in large circular caldrons by laughing, sweating laborers with their trousers rolled above their knees. He examined the shallow trays where the pods were laid out to dry. It was a good cocoa crop. It should set the estate in the black.

He went back to the house.

The temptation to drive into town for news was acute, but he must resist it. Today was Friday: payday. His absence would cause comment. The telephone. Wasn't there someone he could call, someone who in the course of a talk about something else would interrupt with, "I suppose you've heard the news?"

He thought back over yesterday. Bradshaw. He had promised to ask Bradshaw out to hear his election speech. He could ring up to confirm the date for it.

As always there was a long delay, but at last Bradshaw's high-pitched voice came over. "Yes, yes?"

"Maxwell Fleury. It's about my election speech. I'd very much like to give it when you could come. Would tomorrow suit you?"

"It would suit me very well."

"Lunch, then, at half past twelve."

"I'll be there."

Maxwell pictured Bradshaw at the other end of the line, in the coffee room at the Continental. Ten yards away from him on the porch would be a group discussing the morning's news. If only he could hear what they were saying!

A clink came to his ear, a buzz, silence, then a confusion of voices. He'd been cut off. This infernal exchange. He hung the receiver back. He would have to wait till the news reached him in the normal course of events.

At the other end of the line Bradshaw hung up the receiver, then rejoined the group upon the porch and picked up the thread of talk where he had left it. "Is there no doubt at all about its being murder?" he inquired.

"Not the slightest. He must have had his head banged a dozen times. I've just seen Whittingham."

"Were there any clues?"

"If there were, Whittingham wouldn't say."

"Who could it have been?"

Each had his own theory, but they all were agreed that the chances were a hundred to one on its having been some casual thief, who had been surprised and got into a fight with Carson. The chances were high against finding such a person.

Mavis Norman's father was one of the group on the porch. He was worried about the repercussions that this would have outside the island for, as head of the Tourist Board, he had already started to publicize Santa Marta in the American press as a summer resort. He looked thoughtfully now at Bradshaw.

"I suppose it's no good asking you not to mention the murder in your articles. But if you could play it down . . ."

"You needn't be afraid. My story will be more likely to bring tourists down here than to scare them off," Bradshaw said.

An idea for a highly dramatic article had come to him. Carson's Obeah story was a good piece of copy Bradshaw had been keeping up his sleeve. Might not this murder be the Obeah man's revenge? Americans had read about Voodoo; wouldn't they also be interested in Obeah? He'd go out to Carson's place this afternoon and make inquiries.

At the Fleurys', Jocelyn received a call from Euan.

"Colonel Carson's funeral is at four," she told her mother after she hung up. "We'll be going, won't we?"

"Of course."

"We'd better let Maxwell know. I'll ring him up."

Jocelyn went back to the telephone. She had to wait several minutes before she got an answer from the exchange.

"I'll do my best but everyone's ringing up this morning," the operator said.

Ten minutes passed, quarter of an hour, half an hour. Then the operator's apologetic, "I do my best, Miss Jocelyn. Every line's engaged. I try three times. Everyone telephones this morning."

"Don't bother then," she said. "It's not all that important."

THIRTY MILES away at Belfontaine, Maxwell fidgeted on the veranda. The delay was maddening. If only the telephone would ring, or a car swing in off the road! Sylvia was sitting in silence, a tranquil smile upon her lips. He felt foiled and cheated. Today should have been the happiest of his life. She turned her head, her eyes met his and the smile deepened.

"Would you like a punch?" she asked.

"I'd love one."

Anything to calm his nerves. He strode impatiently back and forth while she mixed the drink. This waiting, waiting, waiting. Unless something happened soon, he'd be driven to do something. And that he mustn't do. He must behave as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"A THOUSAND years in Thy sight are but as yesterday . . ."

"Are but as yesterday." Sitting in the Cathedral at the services for Carson, David Boyeur rolled the phrase round his tongue. A Catholic, like most Santa Martans, he only on special occasions attended an Anglican service. He wished his own services were in English, in this proud, rich language.

As he knelt in prayer, he looked through latticed fingers to the left, to the right, then straight ahead. Grainger's sister Muriel was two rows in front of him. He could see the curve of her cheek in profile. He had noticed her lately at the Aquatic. She swam well and had a pretty figure. Why didn't he cultivate her? It was time he married. "Marry fair," that's what his mother had always told

him; if your children were whiter than yourself, people thought of you as going up the ladder.

Margot Seaton was sitting with the G.H. staff. She was wearing a white hat trimmed with black, set at an angle over her eye. What style she had! But she wasn't the wife he needed. He needed a solid marriage, something that would establish him. The Morrises had money. He wasn't in their class, but he had a future. Best get Muriel young before she recognized her attractions. He'd speak to her coming out.

"LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace . . ."

The long service was at an end; the procession started, the troops leading the way, the band playing the "Dead March" from *Saul*, the Archdeacon and the two chaplains following; then the coffin borne on the shoulders of six policemen.

The Governor led the procession as chief mourner; it was a long, straggling, silent group; they had only a hundred yards to walk, then the files broke and divided, forming up in a circle round the grave. The sun was low now in the sky and the trade wind was blowing gustily. The cemetery was on a slope and the choir stood above the grave, the dark purple of their surplices billowing in the wind in rich and somber contrast to the bright green background of the cane fields. The Archdeacon waited while the shuffling of the crowd was silenced, then he raised his voice.

"In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour . . ."

THE GRAINS of earth rattled on the coffin. The bugle sounded. The rifles volleyed their final tribute.

Euan was waiting for Jocelyn at the gate leading from the cemetery.

"Let's go to that beach where we went the first afternoon," he said.

She was grateful to him for suggesting that. Let the affair end where it had begun.

"We'll get there as the sun sinks," she said. "Perhaps you'll see the green ray at last."

He had brought the small Austin. It was a cozy car, and on the way to the beach talk flowed smoothly. They had always felt at ease with each other, right from the very start, from that "welcome here" party at G.H. They genuinely understood each other. It was a pity, Jocelyn thought, that things must end this way.

It was close on six when they arrived at the beach. The sun was sinking fast into the water. It was a cloudless day.

They sat in silence, looking toward the horizon. The sun grew larger, redder; the pace of its descent increased. The sky grew paler as the sun's color deepened. The edge of the sun touched the sea.

"Only another minute now, don't blink," she said.

It was less than a minute: the sun was cut in half, then only a quarter showed, an eighth, a segment, and then unmistakably there was, for a second's span, the flash of emerald.

"I didn't blink," he said. "I really saw it."

"So now you'll admit it wasn't an old wives' tale?"

"Haven't I always believed everything you told me?"

It was ironically appropriate that on this last day they should see the green ray together.

"Let's go and swim before it's dark," he said.

But she did not move. It was time to put him out of misery. She had to make it as easy as she could for him.

"I suppose you and your father discussed that article of Bradshaw's."

"Of course."

"It upset him, didn't it?"

"On the contrary, he seemed relieved."

"Relieved?"

"He said that it had forced all our hands and that he was very glad about it."

"What did he mean by that?"

"It always paid, he said, to get in the first blow. There'll be a lot of gossip in town. Everyone will be wondering what we're going to do. We can stop all that gossip by telling them right away. We'll announce our engagement at once and have a celebration party."

"He said that, did he?"

"I asked him at lunch whether Carson's death would make any difference. He said, heavens, no, we weren't having public mourning. He said we'd cable the announcement to England over the week-end. It should be in *The Times* on Wednesday. We'd announce in that day's *Voice of Santa Marta* that we were having a party at G.H. on Saturday in celebration."

"And what did he say about our getting married?"

"I asked him about that. He said, 'First things first. Let's get this engagement settled, then we'll begin to think about what heroes in Victorian novels called naming the day.' "

She smiled through the fast-falling dusk. H.E. was no fool. He'd not only disarm criticism, but with one gesture he'd get the whole colored population of Santa Marta on his side. No one could say after this that G.H. drew a color bar. But when it came to the actual marriage, he'd stall. He'd raise difficulties, devise separations, play for time, hoping that when Euan got back to England he would find somebody more suitable.

"Let's go and swim," she said.

AT BELFONTAINE, the long slow day had passed with no visitors. Maxwell had started each time he heard the drone of a passing car on the roadway, his ears alert, hearing it roar louder and then die away. In Jamestown they were talking of Carson's death; in the village they were talking of it; in every bungalow along the road it was the first topic of conversation. To this house alone no news of the drama had penetrated, the one house where it mattered.

IT WAS after noon next day when Maxwell rode back from his tour of the estate. The paper must have arrived by now. He rode round to the stables, handed his horse over to the groom, entered the house by the back door. "Hello there," he called out.

"Won't be a second."

The answer came from the bedroom. He hurried through onto the veranda. No, no paper there. He turned into the dining room; not there either, nor in his study. He paused, puzzled, on the brink of calling out to ask where it was, but checked himself in time. He had never before shown any anxiety about the paper.

He went into his dressing room to shower before lunch. Perhaps the paper was in the kitchen and, because there had been no mail with it, Matilda had not bothered to bring it up.

"I'll get the punches ready before Bradshaw gets here," he called out to Sylvia. That gave him an excuse for going down into the kitchen.

His guess had been correct. The paper lay on the kitchen table. He started, half stretched out a hand, then checked. Would he do that normally? No, of course he wouldn't. He'd tuck it under his arm, laying it aside as he set out the drinks, then open it later with some such remark as, "Why one bothers to get this rag at all I can't imagine."

To test his self-control, he took as long as possible setting out the glasses, the savory biscuits, the nutmeg, the angostura, the freshly squeezed lime juice. Then he returned to the veranda.

"I hope that journalist isn't going to be late," he said. He opened out the paper. Now.

He blinked. There it was, right across the front page in one black streamer: MURDER OF COLONEL CARSON. Then a line of single columns: Governor Attends Funeral. Police Refuse Interview. He stared transfixed, then pulled himself together. He could not sit here staring; that would not be the normal thing to do.

"Darling, something appalling's happened, look."

At that moment a car honked in the road. "Ah, there he is." He handed her the paper. "Have a quick look at it. I've not had time to read it. We'll get the dirt from Bradshaw."

Bradshaw could not have come at a better time. It was Sylvia, not he, who was asking the first questions. Her voice expressed a mingling of horror, excitement, curiosity. "It's terrible," she said. "Maxwell's just shown me this. We haven't read it yet. Tell us all about it."

Maxwell looked at her quickly. Did her face, did her voice express anything but the obvious emotions? He didn't think they did. If there had been anything between herself and Carson, she would have betrayed it surely at this moment. Carson, too, had looked surprised in that moment of accusal. Perhaps there had been nothing in it. His jealousy had invented the whole thing.

"When did it happen, how, where? Is anyone suspected?"

Sylvia's questions rattled one on top of another with an eagerness that could not have been feigned. No, there'd been nothing in it. He had the proof of that now. None of this need have happened.

He handed Bradshaw his punch and sat beside him. "Is there no possibility of its being suicide?" he asked.

"None at all. It's quite clear how it happened. He had his head banged against the floor while he was being throttled."

"What is the police theory?"

"They are refusing to commit themselves, but the general idea is that he surprised a thief, and the thief turned on him."

"Had he anything to steal?"

"I don't suppose he had. But the thief would think any white man's house was worth an attempt, and that the best time to try was between six and eight, when he'd be at the Club."

"Then if what the police think is true," said Maxwell, "I must have passed within earshot of his house at the very moment when the fight took place." He turned to Sylvia. "I never bothered to mention it to you, but I walked that evening to the Club. I was worrying about that article of yours, Mr. Bradshaw. I knew that they'd all be wondering how I'd take it. I wanted to clear my mind. I may have been walking past the house at the very moment. . . . Think of it — if Carson had shouted, I would have heard him. I might have saved his life."

He was watching Sylvia closely. Her face had expressed no sense of personal shock. "Or if I'd left home a few minutes earlier, I'd have met him in the street," he continued, "and he might have asked me in for a drink. We were quite good friends, you know, although he was so much older. Then we'd have found the thief there. It so easily might not have ever happened."

Bradshaw nodded. "That's how things usually appear in retrospect. There was a case in Baltimore . . ."

The incident was appropriate to the situation. Maxwell's blood pounded as he listened. He had got away with it; the perfect crime. Here in Bradshaw he had his witness that he had received the news with equanimity. Nothing in his manner could have aroused suspicion. Once again his spirits were carried high, on a tide of confidence.

He'd show these fellows in his speech this afternoon what he amounted to. "Let's ring for lunch," he said.

BRADSHAW was back in Jamestown before seven. The speech had been a great success. There had been no organized heckling and Maxwell had met his audience on a "you and I" basis; he had talked to them as one of them. Afterward, he had wanted Bradshaw to stay on for dinner; he was jubilant, he wanted to relive his victory, like a golfer recounting his medal round, hole by hole. It was a mood with which Bradshaw was familiar. Remaining for dinner would mean having to listen to the whole of Maxwell's speech a second time. That was more than he could take. He excused himself on the grounds of work. He was only in part evasive; he wanted to write his article tomorrow and he needed Whittingham's advice.

A light was burning in the policeman's office, when Bradshaw reached it. Whittingham was in and disengaged. He was seated at his desk; he had pulled out the lowest drawer and was using it as a footrest. It was a position he adopted when he was thinking.

He smiled when Bradshaw was brought in. He did not like journalists and Bradshaw did not seem to him particularly attractive, but he recognized him as a man of consequence.

"So you've come to the fountain's source," he said.

"I'm thinking of diagnosing the murder as an Obeah case. Would that be too ridiculous?"

"It depends on the angle you select."

"I suppose you've heard how he made a fool of that Obeah man on his estate? Could it be a case of vengeance?"

"I don't think so."

"Why not?"

"That's not the way they work."

"They give potions to the natives, don't they?"

"Yes, but those potions are mainly effective because the villagers believe in them. It's faith healing and faith killing. I've known cases in the New Hebrides of strong, healthy men, who had nothing whatsoever wrong with them, turning their faces to the wall and dying within four days because their vanity had been hurt.

These Obeah men are astute. They know when a man is seriously ill. If they lay a spell on such a man, and his friends tell him, it's in the cards he'll die. On the other hand, a man with a basically strong constitution who is told he is going to recover will get well nine times in ten. That's how these fellows work. They aren't Chicago gangsters. They wouldn't tell one of their followers to bump off an enemy."

"Can you suggest any alternative theory?"

Whittingham reflected. Anything he told Bradshaw would appear in Baltimore, and afterward be reported in the local press. Use might be made of Bradshaw. The murderer, if he was an educated person, would read the article. It might be useful to make him feel anxious. An anxious man often gave himself away.

"You might say this," he said. "You might suggest that, though the obvious explanation is that Carson interrupted a casual burglar, the police are not blind to the possibility that a clever murderer would try and make it look like the work of a casual thief. A criminal can sometimes be too clever."

"But had Carson any enemies?"

"Everyone has enemies."

"There's another thing. It was the merest chance that Carson didn't meet Maxwell Fleury on his way from the Club."

"How could that have happened?"

Bradshaw repeated his talk with Maxwell. "Carson and young Fleury were good friends. If they had met, he'd probably have asked young Fleury in. It's a curious coincidence. Fleury may have passed the house at the very moment that Carson was being throttled."

Whittingham made no reply. He was following his own thoughts. If Fleury had passed along that road by foot, he might have noticed something of no significance to him that would help the police.

Two days later in London, Carson's death was reported in a four-line paragraph in an evening paper. It caught the eye of an Opposition leader. He arranged for the Government to be questioned about it in Parliament the following week.

The Minister of State for the Colonies had also seen the paragraph. It was accompanied by a memo in the precise, small handwriting of his parliamentary secretary, Purvis: "Shall I cable for fuller information?"

The Minister reread the paragraph. He had a great deal upon his mind. He wanted to concentrate on the Mau Mau situation in Kenya. He did not want to be bothered with a small West Indian island. He pressed the bell that rang in his clerk's room. "Tell Mr. Purvis that I'm going to telephone Santa Marta; then put a call through to the Governor."

The call reached Templeton as he was on the point of leaving G.H. on an inspection tour of a housing project. "There is nothing to worry about," he reassured the Minister. "It is a tragic business, but it has no social or political implications. I am anxious that as little as possible should appear about it in the press. We are trying to develop a summer season and I don't want to scare the tourists. We have invited a number of American journalists to visit here in July. You'll get my dispatch giving full particulars before the end of the week."

THE PARTY in honor of Jocelyn's engagement was an after-dinner occasion, with a band and dancing; a hundred invitations were dispatched and there was a small family dinner party first. Sylvia and Maxwell had arranged to come in early. Whittingham had suggested that Maxwell should call at his office next time he was in town. Maxwell had expected such a message. That busybody Bradshaw! But he was glad that Bradshaw was, otherwise he would have been forced to call on Whittingham. It would have been suspicious if he had not. Whittingham would have said, "Didn't it occur to you that you might have information of use to us?"

They left in the cool of the morning, shortly after eight. Maxwell was filled with the same exultation that he had experienced a week ago when he had driven out from Jamestown, through the rain. He was alive, alert in every nerve, in every fiber. How fresh and glowing Sylvia looked!

"You look more attractive every day," he said.

She made no answer, but her eyes were fond. It was like a second honeymoon. No, it was not, it was like a first one. She was his sky, his ocean, his sun, his stars. For the first time in his life, he had crossed the boundaries of passion and found love.

WHITTINGHAM was seated in his swivel chair, the bottom drawer of his desk drawn out and his foot tucked into it. He was holding a pigskin wallet, turning it over between his fingers. It must have been expensive, but it had been subjected to rough treatment. The leather was discolored and warped. Maxwell stared at it. Could there be two wallets like that in the colony? Whittingham put it down on the desk, then swung round to face his visitor.

"It's good of you to come," he said. "I don't suppose there's anything special you can tell me, but quite often something that seems unimportant to one man may have a meaning for another. Heavens, but I feel ill this morning." He raised his arm and laid the back of his hand against his forehead. "Fell among friends, I did. A losing battle with the sherbet. I ought to know better at my age. They talk about the last drink doing it, but it isn't the last drink, it's the fifth. Up to four you are all right. From the sixth onward you are lost."

With his high bald forehead, his fresh pink complexion, he looked like a disgruntled baby, crying for its bottle. He was not a person you could take seriously, Maxwell told himself: an amiable old fossil who by slow processes of seniority had become a colonel. But all the same his nerves were tingling. That wallet! What was it doing here? Was it Carson's?

Maxwell longed to look at it, but knew he mustn't. He was not supposed to know that Carson's wallet was missing. All he knew of the case was what he had read in the paper and what he had been told by Bradshaw. Had Bradshaw mentioned a wallet? He could not remember. He must not show a knowledge that he could not have come by naturally.

"Suppose you tell me all that you can remember about that evening. The most trivial incident may be the one piece needed in a jigsaw puzzle. What time did you leave your father's house?"

"It might have been after six. It was almost dark."



"You were alone?"

"Yes."

"Where was Sylvia?"

"At Belfontaine."

"So you came in alone. Isn't that unusual?"

"Yes, but it was the day that article of Bradshaw's was printed, the one about our having colored blood. I wanted to discuss it with my father. We agreed that it would be best if I went to the Club alone. That's why I didn't drive. I wanted to clear my mind, by walking."

Whittingham nodded. With eyes half closed he was rotating himself in his swivel chair, from the leverage of his foot against the drawer. He seemed half asleep. Maxwell was desperately tempted to turn his head, to look at that wallet on the desk, but he mustn't. He mustn't.

"I suppose you were pretty upset inside yourself, I mean you were all worked up?" the Colonel asked.

"Of course, naturally. And I had to attack. I went straight up to Bradshaw. I congratulated him on his article. I made myself the center of the evening. I stood drinks all round. But you heard all that, you hear everything."

Whittingham smiled, rocking himself in his chair. "You walked back by the same route?" he asked.

"Yes. At about quarter to eight, roughly."

"Did you see any lights in Carson's house?"

"No, but then from the road you can only see one upper window."

"Indeed. Is that so? I hadn't realized that. And on the way to or from the Club, did you see anyone hanging about near Carson's house?"

"I saw no one. There was only one car that drove by afterward."

"Afterward. After what?"

"After I'd passed the turning to Carson's house."

"Ah, I see. And that was all."

"Yes, that was all. I'm afraid I haven't been much help."

"Negative information can be quite useful. It precludes certain possibilities."

Maxwell stood up. There was clearly nothing more to say. As he rose, he allowed himself for the first time during the interview to turn his eyes toward the desk. He blinked. It *must* be the wallet he had taken from Carson's hip. Whose else could it be?

He pulled himself together. "I shall be seeing you tonight," he said.

In the passage outside he closed his eyes. His knees felt weak; his heart was pounding. He leaned against the wall. He had been exposed to a greater strain than he had realized. But I got through all right, he reassured himself. I was natural. I didn't give away a point.

IN THE ROOM behind him, Whittingham swung back to his desk and took up the wallet. It was empty and he filled the pockets with paper. He gauged its weight in the palm of his hand. That was about right. He rang the bell and a corporal appeared. "Is Albert there?"

"Yes, sir, he there."

"Good. Then if the car is ready, we're on our way."

In the outside office, a ragged, frightened peasant was seated beside a constable. Whittingham beckoned to him. "Come."

The man followed, whimpering and blustering. "I steal nothing, Colonel sir. I find purse in the cane field. No money in purse. I keep purse. Why not keep purse, Colonel sir?"

"It's all right, Albert. Don't fuss. No one's blaming you. You show me where you found that purse, then you can go home. Come."

They drove along the road to Belfontaine. "Here, Colonel sir."

"Right. Out you get. Walk to the spot where you found this."

The man crossed the road and walked five yards into the cane.

"No farther than that?"

"No, Colonel sir."

"O.K."

Whittingham stood at the edge of the road and with a backhand flick flung the pocketbook toward the peasant. It carried ten yards over his head. The corporal had difficulty in finding it.

"O.K., stay where you are," said Whittingham. He got into the car, put it into reverse, stopped, then drove back toward Belfontaine. As he neared the spot, he flung the wallet through the open window. It did not quite reach the peasant. So, he thought. It didn't prove anything, but it was an indication. "O.K.," he called out. "Back we get."

He drove Albert to his village. "Don't fuss yourself," he said. He put his hand into his pocket and pulled out two single dollar bills. "This'll make up for the day's work you've lost."

He drove back, with the corporal in the front seat beside him.

"Those experiments," he explained, "prove nothing. They could not be produced as evidence in a court of law. But they can be useful to us as indications of what may have happened. It is probable,

but not certain, that that wallet was flung into the cane field by the murderer, after he had taken from it anything of value. We can assume that the murderer was a man. No woman would have been strong enough. Let us assume that the murderer wanted to get rid of the wallet as soon as he had emptied it. That cane field is three miles out of town. Why did he wait so long? That wasn't the first cane field, the first empty stretch of road. Would he walk so far carrying the wallet? It was a wet night, remember. Isn't it likely that he was in a car?

"Remember now what happened when I threw the wallet out of the car window. A man driving a car would throw an object through the right-hand window. As he is driving on the left side of the road, he would therefore have the roadway between himself and the cane field. His right arm would be hampered by the window frame, and his attention would be distracted by his driving. You saw what happened when I threw the wallet from the car. It did not reach Albert. Though this is largely guesswork, we can assume for our own purposes that the wallet was thrown from a car travelling north along the windward coast road. You realize the significance of that?"

"Yes, sir."

"What would you deduce from it?"

"Well, sir." A puckered, puzzled look came into the policeman's face. Whittingham had learned patience. There was only one way to teach these people: through a friendly forcefulness.

"How many private cars are there on this island?"

The answer came back pat. "Three hundred and seventeen, sir."

"And how many trucks?"

"Eighty-seven motor lorries and forty buses, sir."

"Then if we are right in believing that the wallet was thrown through the window, we can limit the field of our inquiries. Instead of searching among the one hundred thousand people on this island, we have to search among the four hundred-odd car-owning families. What do you propose that we should do?"

"Check up on what every car was doing that night, sir."

"Exactly. And will you bring me a list of the car owners who live on the windward coast, north of that cane field?"

"And check the taxis, sir?"

"And check the taxis."

They were now on a point of routine and Whittingham had complete confidence in his constable's capacity to carry out his instructions with accuracy and speed, to be thorough and systematic in drawing up his report. "Delegate all other work," he said, "till this job's finished. And I'd like that list of car owners by this evening. I'll find out who was at the Aquatic Club; then try and trace their movements."

As they reached town, an idea struck him. Instead of driving straight to the police station, he made a detour by the offices of *The Voice*.

He found the editor in. The young man rose hurriedly. He looked nervous. Had he got into trouble over those articles? It was a free country, a free press, but even so . . .

Whittingham guessed his reaction. "It's all right," he said. "I'm not here to arrest you. I'm bringing you a news release."

"That's very kind of you."

"I've an ulterior motive. Before I give you a piece of genuine hot news, I want your promise that you'll use it the way I want."

"I agree, naturally."

"The news is this. Carson's wallet has been found, in the possession of a peasant. I want you to say that the police regard this as a most valuable clue and that they are keeping the peasant in question under close observation."

Whittingham chuckled as he walked down the steps. The paragraph would appear tomorrow. One member of those four hundred car-owning families would be enjoying his last carefree sleep tonight.

CHAPTER 9

"As you have no doubt heard," His Excellency was saying three hours later to Grainger Morris, "Attorney General Lestrangle is being promoted and is to become a judge. That leaves his post vacant. If you will accept it, my own work will be made a great deal easier."

"The Attorney General's," he went on, "is the key position in our administration. Whatever reforms we make must be made legally: the law is above politics. That is the strength of the British people; that is the great gift we have brought to the countries we have colonized — a respect for law, a certainty in the minds of the governed that they will receive justice before the bench, a judiciary that is independent of the executive. I need the best man. You are the best man."

If Grainger Morris appeared to hesitate, it was only because the offer had surprised him. He had been confident that one day the post would be his. But he had had no idea that it would come so soon. "I'm flattered and honored, sir. I'll do my best to justify your faith in me."

"That means that you accept."

"Of course, sir, naturally."

"I'm delighted." The Governor rose with his hand outstretched. "I shall be seeing you here tonight, of course."

"Yes, sir. Thank you very much."

"Fine. I can't say how happy I am about this engagement. Euan is a little young, but there are some things in which prudence does not pay. Jocelyn's a delightful girl."

His voice rang sincerely. Did he really mean it? Grainger asked himself. Was H.E. genuinely unaffected by that streak, faint though it was, of African ancestry in the Fleurys?

The Governor accompanied him to the porch. "Is David Boyeur a friend of yours?" he asked.

"I wouldn't say a friend, sir, but I know him."

"He may be a problem to us, in the next Leg. Co. He's bound to be elected and it may go to his head at first. But he'll learn. He's a good fellow, at heart. See you tonight, my boy."

Grainger's spirits were high as he drove away. Attorney General and at twenty-seven! It was due to luck far more than it was to merit, he knew well. It would never have happened if Euan and he had not become friends at Suez; it was only through Euan's sponsorship that H.E. had become aware of him. Through Euan he had taken a short cut. He had got to show himself worthy of his good luck.

GRAINGER arrived home in the middle of a family discussion. His sister Gertrude's voice was raised. "This is the second time this week. You ought to stop it. Muriel's much too young to go about with a man like David Boyeur. You know what his reputation is."

Her voice was shrill. It often was these days. He remembered how soft it had been, fifteen years ago, when she had sung hymns by Muriel's cradle. He took a seat on the veranda. His parents were there and two of his brothers.

"David Boyeur's been involved with any number of young women," Gertrude was continuing. "He's an upstart. His parents are nobodies. He's earned a cheap notoriety through his trade union, but it can't last."

Grainger made no comment. Let Gertrude get it off her chest. Then he would interpose, tactfully, in a way that would not offend Gertrude, but that would leave Muriel with her freedom.

One had to treat Gertrude gently. She had been a true friend to him when he was a boy; she had encouraged and inspired him. She had heard his lessons, gone over his mathematics with him. He had admired her; she was his ideal.

Gertrude had been handsome, tall, athletic. She had played tennis for the island. She sailed. She was good company. Everybody liked her. During his years in England they had written to each other every week. It had been a shock to him to find on his return how time had soured her.

For him it had been a period of progress. For her it had been a time of slow sad recognition of the tether by which her life was bound. She was thirty and it was unlikely that she would marry. Working in the hospital, accustomed to giving orders, she had grown authoritarian in manner.

He had seen the same thing happen to many English women who were doomed to spinsterdom because they would not marry out of their own class. Ambitious young men wanted to better themselves. In England they married a girl with money; in Santa Marta they married a girl with a better skin. And Gertrude was the dark one of the family.

In another ten years Gertrude would perhaps become adjusted. She would be matron of the hospital, a position of high respect.

She would have built up her defenses. But at the moment she was in turgid waters. She turned for support to her eldest brother. "You agree, don't you, that Muriel shouldn't see so much of David? A girl of her age ought only to go about alone with the kind of man whom she could suitably marry."

"What men, for instance?"

"Michael Forrest. John de Boulay. Eric Des Voeux."

They were all of them so little colored that in England they could have passed as white.

Color, color, color . . . How it ran through everything. How ingrained in every West Indian was that predilection for the "better skin."

They were still discussing Muriel's future when they went in to dinner. They had their meals in the drawing room; their living room was the veranda that ran three sides of the house. The drawing room was littered with assorted furniture, china and silver cabinets. Some of the pieces were good; most of them were worthless. The walls were decorated with oleographs and enlarged photographs; there were two plates emblazoned with pictures of Edward VII and Alexandra at their coronation. Remembering rooms that he had seen in London, Grainger found his home tasteless and tawdry. It irritated him to be surrounded by so much junk.

The Graingers kept two servants. Their cook had prepared the kind of dinner that he had been eating for as long as he could remember: a thin chicken soup, tasteless without a sprinkling of chili sauce, followed by roast beef. The meat was tough — as always in Santa Marta, since it was cooked on the day the animal was killed. The joint was accompanied by starchy vegetables: yams, mashed taros, sweet potatoes.

Grainger was sick of West Indian cooking; it had no personality. In India and the Middle East a cuisine had been evolved in keeping with the climate and the people's faith. There was no such tradition here. West Indian cooking was superimposed, as everything in every way was here. Superimposed was a key word to West Indian life.

Sitting at his father's table, on what should have been one of the proudest evenings of his life, Grainger was vividly conscious of his isolation. This was the house in which he had been born, the

setting of his childhood's memories, yet he had not here the sense of family that his English friends living in their furnished flats had. If anyone had told him on his seventeenth birthday that within ten years he would be the colony's Attorney General, he would have pictured himself as rushing home proudly to proclaim his triumph. He wanted to tell his parents about it today, but the words stuck in his throat. This appointment meant much to him. To them it would mean something altogether different. They would be happy for the wrong reasons.

THE BAND was playing when Grainger arrived at Government House. The dining room had been cleared and a buffet set under the royal portraits. He looked round him, wondering which group to join. Then he saw Mavis. At the same time she noticed him. Her eyes brightened. As he walked toward her, she moved from the group that she was in.

"Shall we dance?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Let's talk instead. It's years since we saw each other."

It was barely a fortnight, yet it seemed a long time to her. He was touched and warmed.

"What have you been doing? Have you had any thrilling cases?"

"Nothing sensational in that line. But something exciting has happened to me, personally."

"You're going to be married?"

"Heavens, no, no likelihood of that. I'm going to be Attorney General."

"Grainger, how wonderful." Her delight was too spontaneous to be feigned. "What a difference this will make. There's nothing you can't do now."

Two hours ago in his father's dining room, he had felt he could not talk about his appointment because he had known that his parents' reaction to it would jar upon his nerves. They would see the event in terms of prestige and emoluments. So did he, too, of course; but there was another, more important aspect, of which he could not have spoken to them, but of which he could to Mavis.

"I want to create in these people a respect for law and justice.

I want them to realize that the law is something that they have created themselves for their own protection; that they can alter it through their own elected representatives. They must cease to think of the law as something imposed upon them by a European master. Do you see what I mean?"

"I see what you mean."

"There's so much a lawyer can do. I've heard Americans say that a great judge of theirs in the eighteen twenties, Mr. Chief Justice Marshall, did as much for the country as the actual framers of the Constitution by the decisions with which he interpreted and illuminated the Constitution. A single lawyer giving honest and wise decisions can create a new mentality among a people. I've a chance of doing that."

His voice was glowing. His eyes shone.

"You'll do it," Mavis said. "You'll do it."

THE ELDER Fleurys looked at Jocelyn and Euan dancing.

"They really do seem happy together, don't they?"

"I don't think we need to worry about them."

"And Sylvia seemed happier this evening than I've ever seen her."

"I thought so, too."

"Maxwell seems satisfied with his second election speech."

"I've heard from other sources that it was very good."

"Do you think he will be elected?" she asked.

"It's not unlikely."

"Will that make things awkward for you?"

"I don't see why it should. He'll be on the same side as I am as often as not. He's nothing against me. At least I don't think he has. He hadn't gone into this to even out a score. It was only a need for self-assertion. He had his brother on his mind. That's been his trouble all along."

"I think you're right." She paused, thoughtfully. For so long Maxwell had been a problem to her. Now, suddenly it seemed as though that problem had been solved. And Jocelyn, that was a responsibility relieved. She had always had a guilt consciousness with regard to Jocelyn. She was quit of that now.

She looked at her husband fondly. "It's good, isn't it, being on our own again, just the two of us."

EUAN HELD Jocelyn closely, his cheek resting against hers. Why did she love him? she asked herself. And answered: Because he stood for certain things: decency, an essentially honest and honorable attitude to life. You could not imagine his doing anything that was not straight. He could not lie, he could not cheat.

I shall watch him, she thought, across an ocean, follow his career, see photographs of him, note how he's changing, what he does. He must have nothing from me that won't add to him; nothing that he won't be able to look back on happily, with pride.

The invitation card had read 9:30 to 12, but it was close on one before the Governor signaled to the band to play the national anthem. He stood on the doorstep, bidding the guests good night. It was a night he had looked forward to often, a night of which he and his wife had dreamed: their son's engagement party. In a sense it was bitter that she was not here to share it with him; yet he wondered if she would be happy about this marriage. Would she think he was acting wisely?

When the Fleurys came toward him now he noticed how like her mother Jocelyn was. His heart gave a sudden quirk. He might very easily have fallen in love with Betty Fleury in their youth. He put his arm round Jocelyn's shoulders.

"This is a very happy day for me. I can't begin to tell you how proud I am for Euan's sake." To his surprise he found that his voice was trembling.

She looked up quickly, hesitated, then raised herself upon her toes and kissed his cheek. "You're a dear," she whispered.

There was a mist before his eyes. He did not know whose hand he was shaking next.

MAXWELL left town early the next morning. He wanted to drive in the cool; he also wanted to surprise his laborers, to see how much they did in his absence. Within ten minutes of his return, he had changed his clothes and was on his horse; he did not get back till half past twelve.

"I'll be ready as soon as that punch you're fixing is," he shouted to Sylvia.

"Hurry," she called back. "For once there's some real news in the paper."

"What is it? Tell me."

"They've found Carson's wallet."

He was glad that she could not see him at that moment. They talked in novels of bleaching under your tan. He felt as though every drop of blood had been drained out of him. He walked round to the stables slowly; mechanically undid his pony's girth.

"Hi, George, unsaddle Susie," he called out.

So it *had* been Carson's wallet on the Colonel's desk. How had it got there? Who had found it?

He must not hurry, he warned himself. He must behave as though nothing of concern to him had happened.

On the veranda he picked up the punch and sipped.

"Fine. I needed that," he said. "Let's see the paper."

It was headlined across three columns. COLONEL CARSON'S WALLET. FINDER DETAINED. Then across double columns: SENSATIONAL DISCOVERY. POLICE HAVE CLUE AT LAST.

He put down his glass. He rested his hand against a chair, pressed down on it. Steady, he told himself, steady. Keep your head. He read the paragraph. It was only six lines long.

"It doesn't tell us much," he said.

"It tells us there was a wallet missing. We didn't know that."

"Didn't we?"

"How could we have?"

Indeed, how could they have? That was the trouble. He kept forgetting what they were supposed to know or not know.

"It's very vague about the man who had the wallet. I wonder why they don't give the name," she said.

"I suppose they want to keep the real man guessing."

"The real man? But why shouldn't the man who had the wallet be the right man?"

"If he were, he wouldn't be carrying it around with him."

"Then why do the police say its discovery is a valuable clue?"

He thought fast. He didn't see that it was a clue at all, unless

. . . a sudden frightening thought had struck him. "If they know where the pocketbook was found, they know where the murderer went that night. That gives them some indication of the area in which he lives."

"It doesn't say where they found it."

"Doesn't it?" He reread the paper. "No. But it must have been some help to them to know."

The knowledge that it must have been disturbed him. It would limit the scope of their inquiry. Or would it? Why should they think that it had been flung there by the murderer on that night? He could have kept it on him, waiting for an opportunity to throw it into a cane field far from where he lived.

He might have; but that's not what I did, Maxwell told himself. I wanted to get rid of that wallet and watch as soon as possible. I didn't even drive home by the longest road. If I had it would have looked suspicious: to be found late at night on the leeward coast road. I did what the average man would have done in my position, made for home by the quickest road and got rid of the watch and wallet at the first available opportunity.

He picked up his glass and sipped at it. He would have given a lot to gulp it and then ask Sylvia for another. But that would be unusual. He must not do anything unusual. How long had this perpetual self-watching to continue? Why hadn't he followed his first impulse and gone to the police?

The maid stood in the doorway. "Lunch is ready, mistress."

He finished his punch with a quick gulp, and held out his hand to Sylvia. She took it and, drawing herself to her feet, let her weight rest against his arm. She lingered there, smiling up at him. Never had he felt so close to her. Never had he felt so far away.

NEXT MORNING Maxwell rang up Whittingham. Unless I have some inkling, I shall go mad, he had told himself. He'd got to find some excuse for seeing Whittingham, then lead the conversation round to the investigation, and find out how the land lay.

"It's nothing important," he said, "but I'd like a word with you next week when I'm in town. Which day would suit you best — Tuesday or Wednesday? Tuesday? Fine. About eleven."

HE FOUND Whittingham as he had found him on the previous visit, his foot resting in the lower drawer of his desk.

"What can I do for you?" the Colonel said.

"Not a subscription for the Belfontaine Committee."

Whittingham gave a start. "What do you know about the Belfontaine Committee?"

"Nothing in particular. I have heard it mentioned."

"By whom?"

"I can't remember. Someone in the Club."

"Indeed. You're the last person I should have expected to have heard of it." Whittingham's surprise was manifest.

The Belfontaine Committee. It had slipped out suddenly. Where had he heard of it? He pondered. Suddenly the scene came back. The street near Carson's house. The sneer on Carson's face. Carson's first question, "What can I do for you? Not a subscription for the Belfontaine Committee?"

Once again terror struck him. Had he given himself away? He must hurry on now as though he had not said anything unusual.

"I've come to ask about my property during the elections. Do you think it's safe? Ought I to take special precautions? You've always said that my parish was the most unsettled in the island."

"It is. But I've made arrangements with the local police officer that he can get help quickly if it's needed. Everything's under control, I think," he added, "though I may be flattering myself. It's like the dams that one erects to keep out a flood. One doesn't realize till the flood comes how strong they are."

For a quarter of an hour they discussed the temper of the district; as always Whittingham was bland, talkative, congenial. Then Maxwell picked up his hat. "I must be on my way," he said. As though struck by an afterthought, he added, "I see you've found Carson's wallet. I suppose that that was it on your desk the last time I was here."

"Was it? I don't know, it may have been. When were you here?"

"Saturday of the week before last."

"Then it very likely was. What made you think it was?"

The moment he mentioned the wallet, Maxwell was afraid that he had made a mistake, but he had to go on with it now.

"You were holding a wallet in your hand when I came in. You put it on the top of the desk."

"Did you recognize the wallet?"

"Of course not. How could I? I'd never seen his wallet. But reading that article next day, I put two and two together."

"Naturally. Of course."

"After all, it's only a few of us who can afford pigskin wallets."

"So you could recognize it as being pigskin."

"I thought it was pigskin. It *was* pigskin, wasn't it?"

"I can't remember. It was ruined by rain. It didn't matter. I knew it was Carson's because of the papers in it."

"You'd think he'd have destroyed them."

"Who?"

"The man who found it."

"Yes, you would think so, wouldn't you?"

"Isn't the fact that he had the papers on him a proof that the man who had the wallet couldn't have done the murder?"

"Why do you say that?"

"The man who had done the murder would have surely destroyed everything that could connect him with the crime. He might have kept the money. Money's anonymous after all, but a thing like a wallet or a watch!"

"A watch?"

"Or a ring, or perhaps a fountain pen."

Watch. Why did I say watch, Maxwell asked himself. There'd been no mention of a watch. Had the Colonel noticed?

Whittingham suddenly went off on another tack. "Have you seen *The Voice* today?"

"No."

"Then you've not read Bradshaw's latest article. Here it is, run your eye over it."

It was the article that Bradshaw had discussed with Whittingham. It began with a section about Obeah, giving Bradshaw's reasons for disbelieving that Carson's was an Obeah murder. It then mentioned the loss of the watch and the wallet, and suggested that these might have been taken so as to make the crime look like the outcome of theft and violence.

As he read, Maxwell was conscious of Whittingham watching him with his lazy, seemingly indifferent stare. It made him feel uncomfortable; he wanted to look up and meet that stare but he felt he shouldn't.

"Finished?" the Colonel asked.

Maxwell nodded.

"You hadn't read that article before, you say. It's rather curious, you know."

"What's curious?"

"The watch. Your mentioning a watch. No one outside this office knew that the watch was missing, until this morning."

"Bradshaw must have known."

"I told him. But I told him not to mention it around here. I didn't want anyone but the murderer to know about its being missing. There was always a chance of his giving himself away."

"How could he do that?"

"In several ways. He could say, for instance, 'I wonder if they've found the watch yet.' How would he know that there was a watch missing?"

He was smiling as blandly as ever; his face wore its habitual vacuous expression. Maxwell's irritation mounted, and with it a sense of fear; he felt that he was being encased by some vast, flabby substance, whose hold would gradually suffocate him in its warmth and thickness. It exasperated him into action.

"Why did you say that it was curious my mentioning the watch?"

"Because you couldn't have known then that a watch was involved, yet you *would* know within two hours." Whittingham proceeded to deliberate aloud on cases in which people had had similar glimpses of the future.

Maxwell could have thrown his hat on the ground and stamped on it. There were things he had to know, had to find out, and here was this old fool blathering on. *Steady*, he warned himself, *steady*. How often had he not issued that warning to himself? How many more times would he not have to issue it?

"But why did you tell Bradshaw about it?"

"Because I wanted it in print, after a certain interval. To begin with, as I told you, I wanted to keep the murderer guessing. There

was a chance he might give himself away at once; but he hasn't done so. Then, after three weeks or so, I thought it would be useful to let him know that we were interested in the watch and wallet."

"Do you agree with Bradshaw about its being done by someone who wanted to make it look like theft?"

"Did Bradshaw say that?"

"I thought he did."

"Let's see the paper. I read the article in a hurry. But I didn't think he said exactly that."

Maxwell handed the paper over. Whittingham looked at the last paragraph. "No, as I thought, he didn't say quite that. I'll read you what he says: 'Everything points to the murder having been done by a housebreaker who was interrupted by Carson's return, but the police are alive to the possibility of the murderer's having attempted to make it look like a thief's handiwork.' Not quite the same thing, is it?"

"No, no, indeed not. I read it quickly."

"Of course, of course."

There was a pause. Whittingham appeared to be in no hurry for him to go. Whittingham never seemed to have any work to do. He was always in when you called. The telephone never rang. No visitor was announced. It was hard to believe that this office was the center of security in the island.

The pause lengthened. It made Maxwell feel awkward. He had to say something.

"Do you yourself think it's likely that the murderer tried to make it look like theft?"

"My dear fellow, how should I know? It's a possibility. There are many possibilities. I am in the dark."

"But you must have a theory?"

"Why should I? It's a mistake to have preconceptions. You must keep an open mind."

"It seems a curious way to track down criminals."

"You read too many detective stories, my dear friend."

"But . . ." Maxwell checked, baffled. He had the sense of that warm, soft, flabby substance suffocating him again.

"Things have to happen quickly in a detective story," Whitting-

ham was saying, "and in a detective story the policeman is working on one case only. In real life he's working on a dozen simultaneously; so many pots simmering. I very often know who is the criminal, but I have no proof. I sit here and wait. He probably plays into my hand someday. I'm in no hurry. Look at the steel cabinet over there: it's full of files. I know at least twenty people in this town who would give ten years to have ten minutes inside that cabinet. I sit and wait and lay my little traps. Nine times in ten they give themselves away."

"In what way? Give me an example."

"Let's see, can I think of one? It's usually something very trivial: a look, an intonation, the use of one word rather than another. There was a case in British Guiana a long time ago, I wish I could remember the exact details. I ought to have kept a diary. I shall never be able to write my reminiscences; they'd have been worth reading. This B.G. case now. It was forgery. What put me onto my man was his saying 'afterward' instead of 'after.' It gave the suggestion of something happening after a definite event. I wonder if you get the point.

"Suppose, for instance, you were telling me that you called round at the Club on your way back home. You'd normally say, wouldn't you, 'I looked in there after lunch,' but if you were to say 'afterward I looked in at the Club' that's somehow different. It gives the impression that something definite and dramatic happened about lunchtime. 'Afterward' — it's a powerful word."

Maxwell felt as if he were being stifled, yet he shivered too. "After," "afterward"; hadn't he himself confused those words in this very room ten days ago? Hadn't he said "afterward" instead of "after I passed Carson's house"? "Afterward" must have given the impression that he had seen that car in the road after some definite event. Wouldn't it have been normal for him to have said, "after I passed Carson's turning"? But instead of that he had said "afterward." Hadn't Whittingham caught him up, asked, "after what?" He had barely noticed the slip at the time, but now it all came back, vividly, startlingly.

"We set our little traps. We lay our ground bait. We sit and wait," Whittingham was repeating. His face looked as innocent as

a child's. It was impossible to think of him as a malevolent spider, watching from the center of his web. "If you are worried about the people in your district, get in touch with our officer. He'll look after you," he said.

"WE SET our little traps. We lay our ground bait."

Maxwell sat at the wheel, trembling, unable to release the clutch. "After," "afterward." What other slips had he made? The watch. The Belfontaine Committee. What on earth was that? Why had Whittingham started at the name?

He shivered. He was in a fog. But I'm safe, I'm safe, he told himself. I left no clue. Even if he suspects, even if he knows, there's nothing he can do. He must have evidence.

He must clear his mind, think of other things, of the elections, of Sylvia, of the estate, of Jocelyn's marriage. He would go to the Club, stand a round of drinks, behave as though he hadn't a trouble in the world.

The Club was crowded. There seemed to be some celebration.

"What's this in aid of?" he inquired.

"Bradshaw's farewell party. He's going round the islands for ten weeks."

A Club waiter was at his side. "Mr. Bradshaw's order, sir."

"Pony rum and ginger." Maxwell crossed over to his host. "You've got tired of us very soon."

"It isn't that. I need to see the other islands. I'm told that every island is a little different; I shall understand this one better when I've seen the others."

"That's very true."

But that was only in part Bradshaw's reason for setting out on this trip. He had come to the conclusion suddenly that he had overstayed his welcome, or at least was less welcome since his article on the color question. He had been congratulated on the article. Everyone had agreed that he had said something that had needed saying, but as individuals they were apprehensive about what he might have to say about themselves.

Moreover he had come to suspect that nothing very dramatic would happen in Santa Marta for some weeks. The stage was set,

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Moreover he had come to suspect that nothing very dramatic would happen in Santa Marta for some weeks. The stage was set,

but the curtain was not likely to rise till after the elections. When the new Leg. Co. was elected under universal suffrage, sparks would fly. Until then, he might as well be somewhere else. He would see Santa Marta with new eyes on his return.

"I shan't attempt Jamaica," he told Maxwell. "It's too big, too complicated. But I'll have a week in each of the smaller islands, and a couple of weeks in Barbados. I shall finish with a day or two in Trinidad, for a meeting of the Caribbean Tourist Board. Several American reporters will be there. I want them to write up Santa Marta as a summer resort: a bargain paradise, that'll be the line. I'm persuading a few of them to come on here. They might do something for the island."

He seemed in a very benign, expansive mood. "Have you heard anything about the Belfontaine Committee?" Maxwell asked him.

Bradshaw started as Whittingham had done. "I shouldn't have thought you'd know anything about that," he said.

"Why not?"

"Do you know what it is?"

"As a matter of fact I don't."

"Where did you hear of it?"

"I can't remember now. I asked what it was, and people laughed."

"I'm not surprised. It's meant to be a secret."

"As I've heard so much, you'd better tell me the rest."

"I suppose so." Bradshaw paused and looked about him. "A fund's being raised to give your father a present; it's ostensibly because he's going on the Leg. Co. as a nominated member. Actually it's a tribute to all that he's done for the island. It's intended to be a complete surprise for him. Everyone has been told to be very careful about referring to it when the family is about. So you see . . ."

Maxwell saw all right. No wonder Whittingham had started. But would it occur to Whittingham that he had heard it from Carson on that fatal evening? A sudden alarming thought struck him.

"Who's the chairman of the committee?"

"The Archdeacon, as of now."

"What do you mean by 'as of now'?"

"Originally it was Colonel Carson."

CHAPTER 10

TEN WEEKS later, Bradshaw landed in Port of Spain, Trinidad. He was well documented now about the Caribbean. If any of these small volcanos were to erupt — Santa Lucia, St. Vincent, Nevis or Antigua — he would have his material ready. Each island had its own special characteristics, the outcome of history and geography. In some, St. Kitts in particular, the color bar was marked; in others, Grenada for example, it was practically nonexistent. Some were prosperous and some depressed. In some wealth and power were in the hands of a few feudal families; in others the land was divided among small peasant proprietors. In some there was political unrest; in others there was a workable basis of democratic government. Some, such as Barbados, owed a deep loyalty to England, while Santa Lucia was more excited over the arrival of a French than of a British battleship. Barbados was his favorite. It had everything for a person of his tastes: antiquity, tradition, brick-built estate houses with dignified eighteenth-century lines, old silver, old china, old furniture. It reminded him of Charleston; but in Barbados the feudal tradition was still maintained.

As soon as he could, Bradshaw studied the back files of *The Voice of Santa Marta* in the Port of Spain library. Nothing much had happened in his absence. The elections had taken place, and both David Boyeur and Maxwell Fleury had been elected. There had been the opening of the new Leg. Co. with His Excellency appearing in his embroidered coat and cockaded hat with ostrich plumes. There had been only formal business then; the real tension would not arise till the first general meeting when Boyeur crossed swords with authority. That should be worth seeing and he would be there to see it.

At the St. James Hotel, the Belfontaine Committee had presented Julian Fleury with a silver cigarette box in token of his services to the island.

There was a short article about the new Attorney General, listing Grainger's athletic feats in England; at the foot of the

article was a paragraph that made Bradshaw raise his eyebrows; it announced the engagement of Grainger's younger sister, Muriel, to David Boyeur. David wouldn't like that, Bradshaw thought. He'd prefer to have the story *Boyeur's future brother-in-law is H.E.'s choice as Attorney General*.

THE TOURIST BOARD turned out to welcome Bradshaw and the visiting American journalists to Santa Marta. Denis Archer represented the Governor.

"H.E. wants to welcome the press boys and find out what he can do for them," he told Bradshaw. "Tomorrow, I imagine, they will want to tour the island with you by car. When we find out how long they'll be here and what they want, we can make our plans."

Several of the local girls were requisitioned to act as hostesses on the tour of the island the next day. Bradshaw was placed in the same car as Doris Kellaway. He had rung up Belfontaine and arranged that his carload should look in there for a punch.

"You wouldn't mind stopping there, would you?" he asked Doris.

"On the contrary, I was going to suggest it myself. I want to see Sylvia particularly. You've heard her news?"

"No, I only got back yesterday."

"It's marvelous. She's going to have a baby."

MAXWELL could not have been more gracious in his welcoming of the journalists. He took them on a tour of the grounds, then of the *boucan*. He discussed the resort possibilities of Santa Marta.

"I don't know how it'll strike you," he said. "You've seen so many more of the islands than I have. You can compare one island with the other, but from what I've been told and from what I've read there are certain things here that you can't get anyplace else, at the same price, that's to say. We've a real sense of the past here. And there's no better bathing in the Caribbean. What's your candid view about this as a summertime resort?"

Four months ago he would have been a poor advertisement for the island; now he was a good one. Once he would have belittled the island, or himself; he would have been truculent toward these emissaries from a larger world, ready to take offense, putting the

others' backs up. Today he made the journalists want to be able to do something for him.

Bradshaw turned to Sylvia. "Success has made your husband quite a different person," he said. "It's a point that Somerset Maugham makes: we're all pleasanter people when the sun is shining. Your husband does not seem the same person that he was when I came here first."

Sylvia smiled. "I have you to thank for that. It started with that article mentioning the Fleurys."

"You genuinely believe that article made all that difference?"

"He admits it himself. Maxwell always had a feeling that people were against him, that he hadn't been given a fair chance. He was jealous of his brother. And in addition, he had that insane, ridiculous hatred for the colored people. He was no good on that account at running an estate. Then your article came out; he realized that he was one of them; it's made all the difference. He thinks that subconsciously he knew it all along, that when he was a child a nurse or a housemaid must have made some remark about the Fleurys having colored blood. Your article was a violent form of shock treatment."

"The change really started with that?"

She nodded. "The very day. I remember the morning it came out. He was furious: he was going to sue you for libel; heaven knows what else. He drove into town, to see his father, directly after lunch. He came back a different man." She smiled, a fond and tender smile.

Bradshaw too smiled, for very different reasons. Journalists were always accused of making copy out of their friends; particularly a gossip columnist like himself. He resented the criticism; it was his job to write about personalities. At the same time, he had his conscience. He exercised discretion. On occasions he had abused a confidence. He had done it knowingly, remembering Maugham's remark that it was hard to be both a writer and a gentleman. When the temptation was too strong, when the copy was too good, he yielded.

He had known that he was betraying a trust when he had revealed the secret of the Fleury ancestry. The Archdeacon should

not have told him, but the Archdeacon had. He had been ashamed of himself afterward. He would never have written the article if he had known that it would be reprinted in *Santa Marta*. Yet, ironically, the one act of which he was ashamed since his arrival had unquestionably, irrefutably done good.

He enlarged on the topic to Whittingham on the following day. "Out of Evil, Good," he said. "There's no doubt that Maxwell Fleury is a reformed character, and it's entirely due to that article. At least that's what his wife assures me."

"There's a change all right; we've all noticed that."

"And it started, Sylvia tells me, the day that article appeared."

"Is that so?" Whittingham looked very thoughtfully at Bradshaw. "Looking back, in what kind of mood would you have said Fleury was that night at the Club?" he asked.

"Very self-assured. He took me aback. I'd never seen him like that before."

"The phrase is a cliché, but would you say he was bubbling over with some inner — I don't know what the word is, but you know what I mean."

"I do. I'd say that's how he was. Incidentally, are you any nearer to finding out who killed Carson?"

Whittingham hesitated. Bradshaw was proving a useful cat's-paw. There was no reason why his usefulness should not be exploited further. He nodded. "You've been away ten weeks. That means I'm ten weeks nearer."

"You're confident that you'll get the murderer?"

"Quite confident."

"I suppose you can't tell me anything."

"Nothing that you could use. I'm afraid that you'll have to do what I do, sit and wait."

BRADSHAW'S next article commented on the apparent inactivity of the police in connection with the Carson case. The murderer was at this moment congratulating himself that he had got away with the perfect crime. Thirteen weeks had passed, no movement had been made by the police, yet it would be unwise for the criminal to become complacent. The police were accumulating evi-

dence; they had their man under their eyes. Sooner or later he would play into their hands.

Whittingham chuckled when he read that article. Bradshaw had played his cards for him very satisfactorily. Whether anything would come of it, he could not tell. But he liked to think of "his man" wilting as he read that piece.

MAXWELL read the article in the Club. He had come in for the day, leaving Sylvia behind. He did not want to have her traveling on that bumpy road more than necessary.

Was Bradshaw right? Or was it only a journalist's guesswork?

He laid down the paper and looked through the window onto the *carénage*. A schooner from Guadeloupe was being loaded with sacks of copra by a couple of longshoremen. They were bare to the waist; their blue jeans were patched; their damp shoulders glistened under the sun. He had a chance now, in the Leg. Co., of doing something for these people. Far more than Boyeur. Boyeur didn't care about the people; only about himself.

For ten weeks now he had let himself forget about that dark quarter hour in that hidden house. There had been the election; then there'd been Sylvia's news. So much had been happening; he had been so happy. Yet all the time the enemy was drawing closer.

He rose. It was ten past eleven. In a few minutes the first of the planters would be in here for his morning punch. When Maxwell had left Belfontaine he had pictured himself standing round the bar, swapping stories, picking up the local gossip. That, after all, was his job as a Councilor: to know how people were thinking, what was on their minds. But he was in no mood now for that kind of morning. He'd have no peace of mind till he'd seen Whittingham.

He drove straight round there without ringing first. As usual Whittingham was in.

"Forgive my barging in like this," Maxwell said. "But our telephone's impossible. You know the way it is with a party line. You've heard our news, haven't you?"

"I have indeed. I was delighted."

"Sylvia won't be coming into town more than she can help, these next few months. But she doesn't want to lose touch with her

friends, so I'm arranging to have people out regularly to dinner. We should so like it if you and your wife could come out one evening. Sylvia often talks of the kindness your wife showed her when she was a child. What day would suit you best?"

Did it sound convincing? Maxwell wondered. He had thought up the scheme on the spur of the moment; Mrs. Whittingham had run the Girl Guides when Sylvia was at school, and it was reasonable that Sylvia at a time like this should want the company of those who had been her mentors early in life. Anyhow, Whittingham did not seem surprised. He was looking at his calendar.

"Nothing I should enjoy better," he was saying, "and the old girl will love it. She gives a lot to those kids. Never had any herself, you know, and she's touched when they remember her. How would Monday suit you? It's the day before the Leg. Co. meeting. Perhaps you want a quiet evening before that?"

"I shan't be igniting fireworks, I promise you."

"Leaving all that to Boyeur?"

"That's the idea."

"Then I'll ring up the old girl now."

He spun the handle and picked up the receiver. Maxwell felt very much as he did when playing golf: alert, concentrated, nervous, but not apprehensive. A copy of *The Voice* lay on the desk, with Bradshaw's article staring at him. Whittingham must have been reading it when he came in.

"Can you remember, darling, if we're doing anything next Monday? We're not; that's splendid. Young Fleury has very kindly asked us out to dinner. His missus doesn't feel like traveling and she thought she'd like to reminisce about those old days in the troop. Good. I'll be home early this evening."

He had been looking at Maxwell as he talked. "That's that," he said. "What time shall we get out? Half past six suit you? I don't want to stay up late. I don't expect you do either."

Maxwell half rose, then, as he had that earlier time, checked and sat down again.

"I see you've been reading that article of Bradshaw's."

"I was finishing it when you came in."

"He says you know who did it."

"I know certain things. I can guess at certain things."

"What things?"

"You can't expect me to tell you that."

"No, but . . ." Maxwell paused. Was he being too eager? Was he being impertinent? Whittingham was nearly three times his age.

"I'm sorry. I apologize. I shouldn't have asked you that."

"My dear boy, you can ask me what you like. I know that you're discreet. And even if you weren't discreet, it wouldn't matter. I like to remind that fellow now and then that I'm still watching him. That I'm still here, in the center of the web."

His voice had a drowsy hypnotic quality. As always the bottom drawer of his desk had been pulled out. He put his foot in it, and began to rotate his swivel chair, his head remaining stationary while the trunk of his body swung. "I've made up my mind. I've decided that the murderer was a clever fellow who wasn't quite as clever as he thought."

Maxwell wanted to close his eyes, as you do when a cloud of dust blows at you. But he mustn't; he knew that: nothing out of the ordinary. "What made you come to that conclusion?"

"Quite a few things. First of all, I became convinced that the man who had the wallet was speaking the truth. I couldn't explain to you how I knew. But after a while if you're in my game you get a second sense of when you're being told a lie. I went out with him to the spot where he said he found the wallet. I'll tell you about that. It'll interest you."

He spoke very slowly, taking a quarter of an hour to explain how he had thrown the wallet out of a car that was being driven northward, along the windward coast.

Maxwell fidgeted as he listened; he wanted to interrupt, to break in on this dawdling exposition. Yes, yes, he longed to say; you're absolutely right. That's the way it was, and two miles farther on if you look you'll find the watch.

He must not look bored. He should be fascinated. Yet he was bored, exasperated, irritated, and at the same time mesmerized. He was outside himself, watching himself, thinking, This is how a murderer gets caught.

At last Whittingham reached his climax. "You see how that

narrows the field?" he said. "A clever fellow, who thinks he's cleverer than he is. There are not so many of those in Santa Marta."

"What more do you know about him? Why on earth should that kind of man want to murder Carson?"

"It was not premeditated. That's what I've concluded. Carson was a choleric man. He might have met someone in the street, and asked him to come in for a drink. They had a quarrel in the house, and Carson took a slug at the chap and slipped, and as he fell he flung out his arms and the other fellow was across him, pinioning him with his knees. He was seeing red, his hands were at Carson's throat; in two minutes there was Carson dead. It was the last thing that poor devil had in mind. If only he'd come to the police station right away, we might have smoothed it out. What a fool he was!"

"Indeed." It came, that "Indeed," from his very heart. What a fool he'd been! What a crazy fool!

"So that's the way it was," said Whittingham. "You see now, don't you, that I've narrowed my field considerably. And besides, I know that this fellow is a man of a certain position."

"How do you know that?"

"He owns a car, or at least he drives a car. Only six hundred and three driving licenses have been issued in Santa Marta. My constables have been checking on the whereabouts on that night of each of those six hundred and three persons."

"But can you be certain that it was on the same night that the wallet was flung away?"

"It's at least probable. If you'd been in his position, wouldn't you want to get rid of it as soon as possible?"

"I suppose I would."

"Of course you would, and so did he."

And you suspect me, don't you, Maxwell thought. Or you think it's possible. And you're right, damn you, but you can't prove it. You've got no evidence. You never will get it.

"But all this is supposition, isn't it?" he asked. "It's not even circumstantial evidence. It's only guesswork."

"That's what it would look like in a court of law; but you can't think what a difference it makes to the policeman when he knows who his prey is, and what a difference it makes to the criminal

when he knows that the detective knows. There's a very curious cat-and-mouse relationship between the two. Have you read *Crime and Punishment*?"

"No, what is it?"

"It's a novel by Dostoevski, about a young student who needs money to continue his studies and kills an old pawnbroker, then robs her. It was written by an intellectual that highbrows rave about, yet he wrote the best detective story I've ever read. He understands both the criminal and the detective. I was rereading it the other day. As a matter of fact I've got my copy here. I'll lend it to you. It'll show you how the game is played. A person who can't imagine himself committing a crime, a person like yourself for instance, can't realize the curious affinity that exists between the policeman and the criminal; I am speaking, mark you, of the intelligent criminal, not the brutal thug. The criminal lives in a prison of his own devising; he can't speak openly to a soul; he inhabits a secret world. The only person who understands him is the policeman who is chasing him. They share a secret; they have a deep bond; it is like a love affair. The criminal is drawn to the detective because the detective is the one man in the world who understands him. Ordinary people, his friends and family, are foreigners. He is only himself in the detective's company. You won't be able to put the book down when you've once started."

He knows, Maxwell told himself as he drove that afternoon along the windward coast to Belfontaine. He knows. And he knows I know he knows. He's got no evidence, but he knows all right.

"WHAT are you reading?" Sylvia asked.

He held out the book. She took it and read out the title: "*Crime and Punishment*. Any good?"

"Terrific. Whittingham lent it to me. We were talking about the way a detective could lure a criminal to give himself away. He said this novel gave the best example of it."

"How did you get on that subject?"

"We were discussing the Carson case."

"I thought it was shelved."

"It isn't as far as Whittingham's concerned."

"We must ask him about it when he comes out on Monday."

Her voice was interested, but not more than interested. She had probably not thought about the case twice in the last two months. Yet her future as well as his was bound up in it. Oh, but so closely bound.

He looked at her thoughtfully. "Carson wasn't a particular friend of yours, was he?"

"I scarcely knew him."

He laughed. "It may sound curious now, but do you know I was jealous of him once."

"Jealous? Of Colonel Carson? Why?"

"On account of you."

"Of me!" Her astonishment was too utter to be feigned.

"It must sound silly now. But in those days, when things between us weren't so happy, I was ready to fancy anything."

"But Colonel Carson, darling. Why ever him?"

"Do you remember the day of that party to welcome Euan Templeton? I was with my father going over the accounts. Carson came up to the house to see you."

"Did he? I must try and think. Colonel Carson. Oh yes, I do remember now. It was to do with the Belfontaine Committee. He had to find out from someone in the family what your father would really like. So he decided to ask Jocelyn. He saw her alone for about twenty minutes. She was very mysterious about it afterward. 'Whatever you do, don't mention it to anyone,' she said. 'I'll tell you as soon as I can.' She told me on the day of the presentation."

"So that's the way it was."

"Yes, that's the way it was and whatever has it got to do with me and Colonel Carson?"

He laughed ruefully. "It sounds ridiculous to me now, but it didn't at the time. When I came back to the house that afternoon the house smelted of a heavy cigarette, Turkish or Egyptian. I wondered who'd been there. You and Jocelyn didn't mention any visitor. It was the one thing in the whole day you didn't mention; so I knew it was something you didn't want me to know. What else could it be but that a man had come up to see you? If he had come to see Jocelyn, you would have made some comment."

"Oh, darling, how absurd."

"But wasn't it natural of me? We weren't happy then, remember, not the way we are now. I was crazy over you. . . . While you — I remember that remark of the French cynic, 'One loves, the other submits to love.' Sooner or later you were bound to fall in love, the way I was in love with you. Then when Carson offered me his cigarette case at the Nurses' Dance, and I saw that it had two kinds of cigarettes, one of them Egyptian for, so he said, special occasions, I saw red."

She rose, came across to him, put an arm round his shoulder, leaned her cheek against his. "Darling, I'm touched. I'm flattered. I wouldn't like it for you not to be jealous, but next time, angel, will you promise me, before you start working yourself up into hysteria, you'll have it out with me?"

"I can promise that."

Her voice was soft and there was in her eyes a loving, protective, almost a maternal look. "I'd no idea you could work yourself up into such a frenzy. How you imagine things," she said.

BY THE Monday evening, Maxwell had only sixty pages of *Crime and Punishment* left to read. He looked forward to discussing it with Whittingham. He could see why Whittingham had loaned it to him. It bore out the old boy's theory, but he could not see that the lending of it need alarm him.

Sylvia welcomed the police officer and Mrs. Whittingham graciously. Maxwell was correct, but he lost no time in opening the topic. As he prepared the swizzles, he said, "I'm very grateful to you for lending me *Crime and Punishment*. I'd probably never have read it if you hadn't. I'd have missed a treat."

"I've never seen him so absorbed in a book before," said Sylvia. "I've almost felt jealous of it."

"I was told to read it by my first chief," the Colonel said. "He said it should be on the manual of Scotland Yard. Whenever I'm up against a ticklish proposition I reread it."

"Was that why you had it on your desk?"

He nodded. "I'd brought it down from the house a week before. I'd been turning the pages whenever I hadn't anything to do."

"What case was worrying you?" Sylvia asked.

"The same old headache, I'm afraid. The Carson case."

"I thought that had been shelved a long time ago."

"That's what one particular man is hoping, but it's a hope that'll never be gratified. That's the point this book brings out so well. As long as the criminal's alive, so is the cat-and-mouse game. You people think the case is forgotten simply because no one talks of it any longer. I don't suppose that you yourself have thought or talked about Carson for two months."

"It's curious that you should say that," Sylvia answered. "As a matter of fact we were talking about him only last week; in such an odd way too. I've been chuckling over it since. Darling, you don't mind my telling the Colonel, do you?"

"Of course I don't."

She recounted the episode of the cigarette. "Have you ever heard anything more hilarious? Colonel Carson and myself—and Maxwell was so jealous; he was off his head about it. Doesn't that astonish you, even with your experience?"

The Colonel smiled. He had been watching Sylvia as she talked, but now he turned toward Maxwell. There was a conspiratorial quality in his smile as though he and Maxwell shared a secret. "No," he said, "not altogether."

He paused; his smile became ironic; then he turned back to Sylvia. "If I were married to anyone as attractive as you, my dear, I should be jealous of every male that breathed."

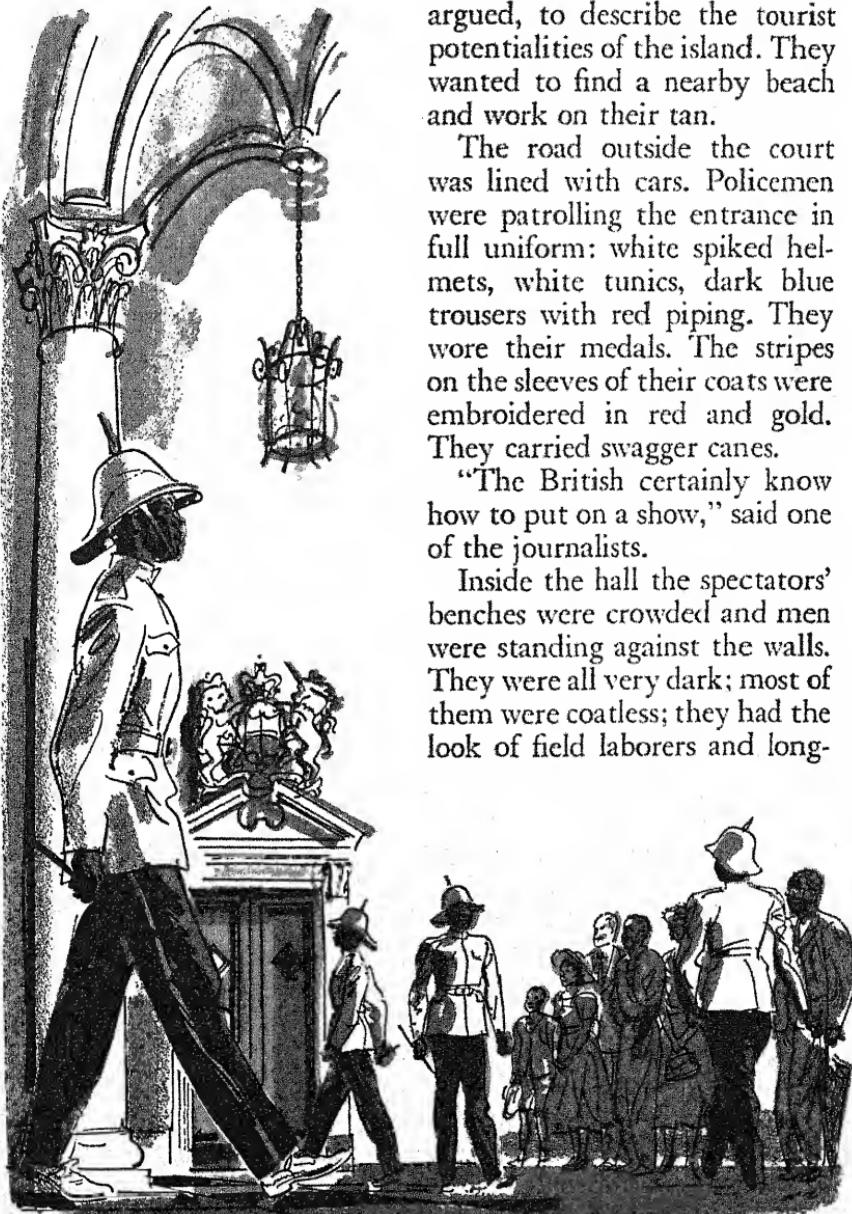
It was the kind of lumbering compliment for which the Colonel was notorious and for which The Inseparables had invented their own counteroffense of Victorian coyness.

"Oh, Colonel, come now," Sylvia said.

He knows, Maxwell thought, he knows.

CHAPTER 11

THE LEG. Co. meeting the following morning was to be held at ten in the courthouse. Bradshaw arrived there at quarter to. He had persuaded two of his fellow journalists to accompany him. They came reluctantly. They were here, they



argued, to describe the tourist potentialities of the island. They wanted to find a nearby beach and work on their tan.

The road outside the court was lined with cars. Policemen were patrolling the entrance in full uniform: white spiked helmets, white tunics, dark blue trousers with red piping. They wore their medals. The stripes on the sleeves of their coats were embroidered in red and gold. They carried swagger canes.

"The British certainly know how to put on a show," said one of the journalists.

Inside the hall the spectators' benches were crowded and men were standing against the walls. They were all very dark; most of them were coatless; they had the look of field laborers and long-

shoremen. Young Boyeur's fans, Bradshaw supposed. He looked round for Boyeur and saw him in conversation with Grainger Morris. Boyeur was wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, a plain Burgundy red tie, and his shoes were black. He was starting to dress the part. Bradshaw caught his eye and came across.

"Is all this in your honor?" he asked.

Boyeur grinned. "I guess some of the boys wanted to see how I made out. I thought they might. I warned Whittingham."

"We'd better sit down," Bradshaw said to the other Americans. "It's five of ten. The Governor will be here any minute now. Look, here he comes."

A policeman came first, bearing over his shoulder the gold mace. The Governor followed. He was wearing a khaki bush shirt with a Sam Browne belt. He looked very imposing as he stood under the royal coat of arms with the red tabs at his collar and four rows of ribbons above his left breast pocket. He recited a prayer hoping wisdom might be granted to the Council. He bowed to his Councilors, and as he took his seat the policeman laid the mace on its stand facing him.

As the hall settled into its seats, Bradshaw was conscious of a rustle beside him and a wave of scent. He turned and there was Muriel Morris. He saw Boyeur turn to her, his face lighting up as he smiled. There was a fondness in that smile that was new to Boyeur. There was pride there and gratitude and friendliness, a look of belonging, a recognition of being belonged to.

"Excited?" Bradshaw whispered to her. She nodded her head twice quickly. This must be a big day for her. He hoped Boyeur did not make an idiot of himself.

The ordinary business of the meeting took its course. Minutes were read; announcements were delivered. Were any petitions to be presented? No. Any papers to be laid before the house? Yes: a report from the Housing Commission. Copies were issued to the Councilors for their information and, if necessary, action. The whole procedure took twenty minutes. It was time then for the first motion. "We may have fireworks now," Bradshaw whispered to his colleagues.

"The first motion," the Governor announced, "is 'That immedi-

ate steps be taken to vote an adequate sum of money to repair the schoolhouse in St. Patrick's.' To be proposed by the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's."

There was a stir, a shuffle of feet from the crowded benches. This was what they had been waiting for.

"Sir." Julian Fleury was on his feet. "Before the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's addresses us, I would like to remind the House that the priorities for the rebuilding and repair of schools lie in the control of the Board of Education. Is it desirable that this House should debate an issue that is being discussed and decided upon in another place? I venture to make this interruption because I am not sure whether the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's is aware of the situation."

The interruption did not discomfit Boyeur. His voice in reply was firm and confident. "The Honorable Member for St. Patrick's is perfectly aware of the fact. It provides an example, a typical example, of what we in this new Council must be prepared to fight. The Board of Education is our servant, not our master. It has been allowed to think of itself as our master, because up to now this island has been run on an antiquated system. . . ." Boyeur went on for ten minutes, attacking a system with whose working every member of the Council was familiar.

The Governor sat back with his elbows on the arms of his chair, his hands clasped on its round knobs. As Boyeur's jeremiad grew more perfervid, his hands tightened their hold. This had to stop. One had to allow Councilors a certain latitude, but Boyeur had passed the bounds.

The Governor looked at the crowded benches. Every face was turned to Boyeur, the eyes wide and gleaming; sometimes the lips moved, following his words in a mesmeric trance. No, this was too much. The Council could not be turned into a circus.

The Governor tapped the table with his gavel and stood up. Boyeur, surprised, checked in the middle of a sentence. He gaped, staring at the Governor. H.E. sat down and turned to Grainger.

"For the benefit of the Honorable Member who is not, apparently, familiar with our procedure, I will ask the Attorney General to read our Standing Order 7c."

"‘Standing Order 7c,’” Grainger read. “‘When the President rises to his feet, any member who is standing will resume his seat.’”

The Governor bowed. “Thank you,” then tapped again upon the table. As he rose, Boyeur sat down.

“I must remind the Honorable Member for St. Patrick’s that his present duty is to propose the motion under his name, namely that immediate steps be taken to vote an adequate sum of money to repair the schoolhouse at St. Patrick’s. The system of government in this crown colony is not under discussion.”

He sat down and Boyeur rose. “I apologize, sir, to you and to the House. I was carried away by my anxiety to serve my people. I had thought what I was saying was relevant, in view of the intervention by the Honorable Nominated Member. Gentlemen, I was carried away. In my place you, too, might have been. I speak of a blot upon our colony. How many of you have ever visited the schoolhouse at St. Patrick’s, where the children of my people are learning to be worthy and loyal citizens of the British Empire? Have you seen its crumbling steps, its leaking roof and rotting timbers? Once it was the house of a rich planter; for many years now no planter has deigned to live in it. It is not good enough for him; but it is good enough for the children of my poor people.”

His voice was under control, it had a rich fierce vibrancy. How sincere was he, how much a self-seeking demagogue? the Governor asked himself. Who could tell what figure he would cut in the eyes of history? History might venerate this young firebrand as a patriot — but the immediate problem was to keep him under control. Boyeur must be made to realize at once that he was one of a team, here to do a job. He had been talking now for thirty-seven minutes, on the value of education, on the history of his race. There was a limit. The Governor tapped the table.

“I must remind the Honorable Member for St. Patrick’s that our time is limited. I must request that he confine himself more closely to the subject.”

Boyeur stood very straight, in silence, then bowed to the Chair. “I am sorry, sir. I am sorry, gentlemen. I was carried away by the thought of my people, my poor people. I apologize, gentlemen. I will be very brief. I have little more to say.”

He took, however, a long time in saying it. His voice had assumed the particular valedictory intonation that is associated with a peroration, but the final full stop was never reached. Boyeur had returned to his attack on the Board of Education.

No, this was too much, the Governor thought. Boyeur had been speaking for six minutes since his last interruption; for five minutes, at least, he had been off the point. The Governor was accustomed to military discipline, where the word "please" was an order. He rapped for the third time.

"For the benefit of the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's, who is not familiar with our procedure, I will call upon the Attorney General to read Standing Order 9."

Standing Order 9 dealt with breaches of order. It stipulated that, if a member showed disregard for the authority of the Chair or persistently and willfully obstructed the business of the Council, the President should direct the attention of the Council, mentioning the member concerned. A motion might then be put that such a member be suspended from the Council, no debate being allowed upon the order.

"I am forced," the Governor said, "to call the attention of the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's to the wording of that motion. If he continues to occupy our time with dissertations that are irrelevant to the motion I shall be forced to conclude that he is willfully obstructing the business of the Council."

This time Boyeur did not apologize. "Gentlemen, I have said all I have to say. I will now propose my motion." He did so.

As he sat down, he turned for the first time to Muriel. She raised her hand shoulder high, fluttering her fingers. Her face was flushed. Pride was there and happiness. She was unaware, evidently, that he had been rebuffed. If she had missed its point then surely his followers had too. They would have seen him, on his feet, haranguing the notables of the colony; they would have seen the Governor sitting in that high-backed chair, listening. They would have recognized that their representative was a man of consequence; that was all that mattered.

Boyeur smiled. Next time it would be even better. Next time he'd be more careful. There were rules that he must remember. It

was all the fault of Fleury; why had he interrupted him with that statement about the Board of Education?

He looked at Fleury sitting across the room, doodling on his pad. How smug he looked! Boyeur's temper rose. Father and son: made in the same mold. They stood for everything he hated. Arrogant, supercilious, self-sufficient.

"Gentlemen, it is now quarter past twelve," the Governor said. "I suggest that we adjourn until a quarter to two."

The policeman strutted forward, lifted the gold mace and sloped it like a rifle on his shoulder; the assembly rose as the Governor followed the policeman to the Judge's chambers.

Julian Fleury came across to Maxwell. "You're lunching at home, aren't you? Can I drive you down?"

Maxwell shook his head. "I'll follow you. I've some eggs and fruit and vegetables in my car. I'd better bring them over now."

He had parked his car in the road leading to the Club. He hesitated, then took the narrow footpath that opened into the path leading to Carson's house. It was the first time that he had been here since the night. He paused, remembering how he had walked up here, at Carson's side, his blood afire, his fists clenched; remembering how he had stolen back, a quarter of an hour later, alert, cautious, apprehensive. A quarter of an hour! That so much could happen in so short a time.

A hand fell upon his arm above his elbow; a familiar voice sounded in his ear. "He must have passed here on that night, wondering if anyone would see him cross this footpath. He may have stopped here for several seconds, listening; it was very dark. There was no moon that night as far as I remember."

"There was no moon."

Whittingham's voice had fused into his reverie so completely that for a moment he had not been conscious of the interruption. Then he started. "You made me jump," he said and laughed.

Was it a nervous laugh? Had he given himself away? But it should, shouldn't it, have been a nervous laugh? It would have been unnatural if it hadn't been.

Whittingham did not appear to notice his start, his laugh, his interjection. His voice went on, with its slow, tranquilizing, languid

quality. His hand still rested upon Maxwell's arm above the elbow.

"It's strange, isn't it, to think of that dark night? Can't you picture him pausing, there where the paths join? He's fifty yards from the road. 'If I can make the road, I'll be safe,' he must have told himself. I wonder if he remembered this footpath, leading to the courthouse; perhaps he didn't. It's very little used. What do you think?"

"I dare say he didn't."

"That's what I think too. He forgot all about it. There's always something that the criminal forgets. That may have been one of the things he overlooked; one of them."

"Were there other things then that he forgot?"

"Of course there were. There always are. But there, he was lucky; no one saw him. We can guess at the surge of relief he must have felt when he turned the corner, there, into the roadway. 'I'm safe. I'm safe,' he must have told himself."

Maxwell closed his eyes. That was how it had been. How clearly Whittingham understood him! Whittingham's voice was kind and tolerant. The pressure of his hand was reassuring. If only he could relax completely: pour out the whole story to the one man in the world who would understand. It would be so easy to tell Whittingham. If only he could say: "Yes, that's the way it was."

But I'll have to fight him off, he thought, for Sylvia's sake, for the child's sake.

That was the key point. He was fighting not in his own defense but in defense of Sylvia and their child. How could a child face the world if its father was a murderer? On the day that he knew for certain that Whittingham knew, he must find the remedy.

"I THEREFORE suggest, sir," Norman concluded, "that a sub-committee should be formed to examine the possibilities of developing Grande Anse as a tourist resort."

He had been speaking for a quarter of an hour at the Council's afternoon session. Julian Fleury rose and seconded the motion.

The Governor tapped with his gavel. "The following motion has been moved and seconded." He read out the motion. "It is now open for discussion by the House."

Maxwell and David Boyeur were on their feet simultaneously. The Governor looked from the one to the other. Maxwell had not spoken yet. He was entitled to speak first. But Boyeur had been subjected to reproof. He should not be allowed to feel that reproof entailed reprisals. He caught Boyeur's eye. Maxwell sat down. Hell, he thought. It was his turn surely.

"May I say, sir," Boyeur started, "that I believe that in this matter we should move with the greatest caution."

He went on with easy fluency, while Maxwell glowered, envious and resentful. Why had he not himself this gift? Of all the capacities in the world it was the most superficial, the most trivial yet the most valuable.

"I will say, frankly, at the start that I shall vote against this motion," Boyeur was announcing. "We have been assured that the development of Grande Anse will prove a good investment, will bring hard currency into the colony. But if that is so, why has not private enterprise developed Grande Anse? We are always being assured, we socialists, that private enterprise is infinitely more efficient than a state-run proposition. The Honorable Members on the other side of the House endorse that contention. If the development of Grande Anse is such a gilt-edged proposition, why have they not formed a syndicate, invested their own money in it?"

He smiled as he spoke this time. There was no note of anger or indignation in his voice. His self-control made him the more effective.

Maxwell was acutely conscious of Boyeur's success. His resentment was quickened by the fact that Boyeur was using many of the arguments that he had planned for his own speech. He, too, had meant to oppose the motion; why could he not have been given the first innings? It was not fair.

"There is another point which I want to make," Boyeur was continuing. "I want to ask, sir, whether an influx of tourists is really desirable in a small island such as ours. We have, and we must admit that we have, a color problem here. Let us consider how the sudden influx of a group of Canadian and American tourists will affect that problem."

Maxwell clenched his fists. This was another argument that he

had meant to use. His speech was being pulled apart. There would soon be nothing left of it.

"It is a delicate situation that we must handle delicately," Boyeur continued. "On the whole we may consider ourselves lucky here. We have known each other all our lives; we know how to avoid friction. But how will these visitors react when they find colored families using the same bathing huts that they do, and sitting at the same bar? Jamaica is so large that visitors to Montego Bay are not socially aware of the existence of African Jamaicans. But we are a small island. We see each other all the time."

It was another of the points that Maxwell had proposed to make. His temper mounted, the same black, ungovernable temper that as a child had made him scratch his nurse's face, stamp on his own toys; the same blind frenzy that on that moonless night had driven him to batter a head against the floor.

He was on his feet before Boyeur had sat down, passionate for revenge, in a need to wound, to cause pain. He sought for searing words and, in the inspiration of hatred, came on them.

"Sir, I must warn the Honorable Members of this Council against being swayed too easily by the eloquence of the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's. We are fortunate to have the privilege of listening to such oratory. At the same time, sir, we must be on guard against his eloquence, particularly on the question of color.

"It is a very tricky situation for all those of us, and we are the majority, who have African ancestry. We are liable to take a biased, a parochial view of the subject. We imagine slights where no slight was intended. If we fail in any enterprise, we attribute our failure to that African ancestry. We have been passed over, we tell ourselves, because we have colored blood. The Honorable Member for St. Patrick's is as vulnerable on this point as the rest of us."

He paused. Now is my chance, he thought. Now for the phrase like a knife. He was still turned to the Chair.

"A traveler may condemn an entire town because he has been cheated by a taxi driver. In the same way a man of color—" He paused, he turned his head and looked at Boyeur. Now, he thought, now—"a man of color who has been abandoned by his mistress in favor of a handsome young English officer . . ."

He said it slowly. Venom and contempt were in his voice. It was a challenge and Boyeur knew it. Boyeur jumped to his feet; his fist banged on the table, rattling the inkpots. "You dare to say that to me!" he shouted.

The gavel beat upon the table. The Governor was standing. Maxwell sat down at once; his heart was pounding. He had succeeded beyond his dreams. Boyeur looked round him, dazed, flabbergasted; opened his mouth, changed his mind, sat slowly down.

"I will call upon the Attorney General to read Standing Order 6," the Governor said.

By Standing Order 6 a member was not allowed to address another member unofficially, or by name.

"I will now ask the Attorney General to reread Standing Order 9, which he has already read to us this morning."

It was the order dealing with action which might be taken against a member who disregarded the authority of the Chair.

"I will now call the attention of the Council to the behavior of the Honorable Member for St. Patrick's, Mr. David Boyeur."

As the Governor sat down he looked toward Julian Fleury. Fleury rose. Within ninety seconds the motion had been proposed, seconded, and carried without a dissenting voice, that Mr. David Boyeur be suspended from the service of the Council.

"What does this involve?" a colleague asked Bradshaw.

"Nothing very drastic; an apology from Boyeur next time the Council meets."

His EXCELLENCY had been trained under a system of "On parade, on parade; off parade, off parade." The fact that your company commander had abused you to high heaven that afternoon for a breach of procedure at the rifle range would not prevent you from sitting next him that night at dinner and arguing over Middlesex's chances in the county championship. Templeton bore no more ill will to Boyeur than he would have to a subaltern he had reprimanded. But he was aware that Boyeur had not been acclimatized to that atmosphere. It was up to himself to make a gesture.

"I want Boyeur and his fiancée up here to dinner," he told his

A.D.C. three days later. "Fix a date with them for next week. Say I want to wish them luck; make it look like a party for them. But the real purpose of the party is that Boyeur and young Maxwell should make up their quarrel. What did you make of it, incidentally?"

Archer flushed and hesitated. How much did H.E. know? "Well, sir, I don't quite know . . ." He paused, waiting for a lead.

"Do you think that remark about Boyeur's being chucked by his girl referred to some actual fact which a great number of people in that room knew? What I'm saying is, did Maxwell deliberately taunt Boyeur?"

"I believe he did, sir."

"That's what I suspected myself," the Governor said. "I want both the Fleurys here on the same night as Boyeur. Make it a command. As for the rest . . . well, make it a young people's party."

Archer returned to his office and seated himself pensively at his desk, staring at the telephone. Boyeur would be in his office now. He had his orders. But . . .

He picked up the receiver of the house telephone and rang Margot. "Could you come here a minute," he said, "right away?"

He did not get up when she came in, merely pointed to a chair. She sat down and opened her dictation pad.

"He doesn't know about us," he said.

"That's good." They had been afraid Maxwell's public reference to their private lives would make things difficult for them.

"We don't have to worry about anything," he said.

"I'm free tomorrow at five thirty."

"I can manage that."

How matter-of-fact she seemed! Yet her placid announcement made his blood tingle.

But it was not to discuss their own plans that he had summoned her during a working morning.

"H.E.'s going to have Boyeur up to dinner," he told her. He outlined the Governor's scheme. "Do you think that's a good idea?"

"I think it's a very bad idea."

"Why?"

"Because of David's vanity. He has been shamed in public. He is angry and bitter. It is very necessary when he is in that mood to handle him in the right way."

"What is the right way in a case like this?"

"Ignore him. Hope that he will simmer down. When his vanity is hurt, he is dangerous. Unless you are absolutely certain what is the right thing to do, it is wisest to do nothing. The chances of His Excellency's making a mistake in this case are ninety-nine to one."

"Do you think I ought to warn H.E.?" he asked.

"If you think you can, tactfully."

"You've been a great help. Thank you."

He returned to his chief's room.

The Governor was holding the receiver of the telephone to his ear. But he had called out "Come in" when Archer knocked.

"No, don't run away," he said. "I've no secrets from you, not official ones at least. London's on the line. Take the weight off your feet." He pointed to a chair, and turned back to the telephone. "There is no need to feel any alarm. You know what journalists are. They think in terms of headlines. I am having the young man up here to dinner next week and I am inviting the group that was responsible for his behavior. In my opinion he was goaded deliberately into that outburst. No, there is nothing to worry over."

"That was the Secretary of State for the Colonies," he told Archer, as he hung up.

Archer had guessed as much. He had listened to the conversation with relief. This let him out. There was nothing he could do about the dinner now. It was a settled thing.

"There've been paragraphs in the London papers about that scene in the Leg. Co.," Templeton was continuing. "The Minister expects questions in the House. He's getting very jumpy. I wonder what's happening over there. Perhaps there's going to be a Cabinet reshuffle. He's got his eye on a promotion. Well, what was it you wanted, Denis? Have you fixed that date with Boyeur?"

"No, sir, not yet," the A.D.C. said. "He wasn't in when I called just now. I came to remind you about that dinner of the cricket club next Wednesday."

DAVID BOYEUR stood in front of his mirror and turned slowly round. He was wearing evening clothes for the first time. He had bought them in Trinidad, three months back, and charged the cost against Union funds. The Union's representative needed to be well dressed. My, but this suit was something, he was thinking. The high squared shoulders, the tight fit over the hips, the narrow waist, the long skirted coat, the shirt with its crisscross piqué, and the black satin waistcoat embroidered with flowers in gold thread. He'd show them!

He arrived at G.H. with Muriel at eight minutes to the hour. Julian Fleury and his son arrived at two minutes to eight.

"I thought you weren't going to make it," Archer said. He led the Fleurys into the room. "This is one of the fortunate occasions when I don't have to bother about introductions," he said.

Maxwell looked round him. He had been worried by the command to Government House. Was Whittingham behind it? He saw the usual group; what was the mystery? His eye ran on, to be checked, in sudden relieved recognition. David Boyeur. Of course. Now he understood.

Boyeur started too. He, on the other hand, was puzzled. What did this mean? He met Maxwell's stare and held it. Young puppy, damned young puppy.

A door slammed upstairs. The Governor stood at the head of the stairway, paused, looked down at his guests, then slowly came down the stairs to welcome them. He was dressed informally in tight-fitting dark blue patrol trousers with a white tunic high buttoned at the neck.

At dinner, Boyeur felt nervous. It was the first time that he had dined at G.H. Its mixture of informality and ceremony made him feel awkward. There were twelve places laid. General conversation was impossible. He could not impose his presence and personality. Mavis Norman was on his left. He did not find it easy to talk to her: small talk was not his line.

Boyeur looked across at Archer enviously. He noted the cut of Archer's dinner jacket. It was white, single-breasted and hung loosely on his shoulders. It had been bought off the peg most likely. His tie was slightly aslant. Yet Archer looked well dressed. He



made Boyeur, with his padded shoulders and fancy waistcoat, feel overdressed. He looked at Julian Fleury, who was wearing a high wide-winged collar and a plain stiff shirt fastened with a single black pearl stud. You never saw a collar and shirt like that in the movie magazines. Yet Julian Fleury, too, looked well dressed. I'm overdressed, he thought. I've got a lot to learn.

He felt embarrassed, sitting there silent, while everyone else was jabbering away. A lot to learn, yes, but he would learn it. He'd show them.

The fish plates were cleared away. The Governor turned to his left, to Muriel.

"Now I want to hear all your plans. May I say that I think you are a very clever young lady to have captured our most eligible bachelor? He has been, from what I gather, the despair of designing mothers-in-law for several years. Now that I see you, I am not at all surprised."

Muriel flushed with happy pride. It was the kind of little speech that she had heard British diplomats make on the screen, old-fashioned, mannered, courtly. The whole evening was like a film. The Governor coming down the stairway, the long candlelit table, the silver candlesticks and flower bowl; the china with the royal arms, the servants in uniform; the whole dressed-up atmosphere of it all; all the men so handsome and so smart, with her David so much the smartest.

Sylvia, looking across the table, noticed and was touched by the look on Muriel's face. The girl was in love all right.

As she looked away from Muriel she realized that Maxwell had been looking at her. He smiled as their eyes met, warmly, tenderly, adoringly. As she smiled back her lips framed a kiss.

When the women left, the Governor beckoned Boyeur to his end of the table. "Come here on my right, David; Maxwell, you move up. And pass the port round, Julian."

The Governor paused, looking round him; there was silence. He was about to execute tactics that he had made use of when he was a colonel, when two young officers had quarreled.

"Look here," he said, "you two are at odds, I gather. There are probably rights and wrongs on both sides. There always are when

two decent young fellows are concerned. Your private quarrels are none of my business, normally, but they are in this instance because they concern the welfare of the re — colony."

He had almost used the word "regiment," the scene was so familiar. Archer, noticing the slip, felt guilty and apprehensive. These tactics would work well enough in a regiment, with officers who had been groomed to this kind of discipline. He doubted if they would work with these two West Indians who had a basic hereditary distrust of themselves and of their neighbors.

"The colony needs you, both of you," H.E. was continuing. "You're the two youngest Councilors. You have great influence, great futures. The fortunes of the colony depend on young men like you. We cannot have a repetition of last week's performance in the Council. You will, of course, David, have to make a statement at the next meeting of the Leg. Co. That's a mere matter of routine. What I want now from you both is a promise that you'll try and forget your quarrel. I want you to respect each other's point of view, to recognize that each in his own way is working for the island's good. What I want you to do now, in earnest of that, is to shake hands across the table."

It was by no means unimpressive, Archer thought. The General was himself an impressive figure, particularly here in his white tunic, with his row of medals, his crown and crossed swords on the shoulder, in the high-backed chair at the head of this long table with the royal portraits above the mantelpiece.

The Governor looked to his left and to his right.

"David, Maxwell."

It was in part a question, in part an order. Automatically, the two young men stood up, their hands stretched across the table. As their eyes met, the A.D.C. would have given a great deal to know what manner of expression the eyes of each held for the other. Their profiles told him nothing.

"Fine. That's settled now," the Governor said. "Keep that port moving, Denis. I don't know what an A.D.C.'s for except to keep the port in motion. One more glass, everyone, and we'll join the ladies."

A quarter of an hour later the Governor pushed back his chair,

and the men joined the women in the drawing room. There, the gramophone had been turned on softly, so that conversation could be continued through it.

Maxwell found himself sitting with Jocelyn and Archer. He led the conversation round to Archer's writing; there was a question he wanted to ask, and finally he found an opportunity to ask it.

"In your stories, do your characters ever commit suicide?" he said.

"Oh, an occasional one."

"How do they do it?"

"It depends on where they are. If they were in Canada, I'd make them walk out into the snow. That's painless, almost pleasant, I believe."

"If you were going to commit suicide yourself, how would you do it?"

"The easiest way: with sleeping pills."

"But everyone would know that you had taken them."

"Naturally."

"That might defeat your point. It would cause scandal for your family. The whole point of the suicide may have been to avoid scandal for your family. Suppose, in a novel, one of your characters wanted to commit suicide so that no one would suspect that it was suicide. How would you make him do it?"

"It would be easy if he was a man," Jocelyn interjected. "He could book a passage on one of those cargo boats that take only a few passengers and don't carry a doctor. He could take sleeping pills and be found dead in the morning. No one would know what was wrong and they'd have to bury him at sea."

Automatically, Archer looked round the room as she spoke; he must move on. He was an A.D.C. and his job was to see that the party fulfilled its function. And there, as proof that he was not doing so, was David Boyeur, glum and silent on the wing of a group of four. He excused himself to Maxwell and Jocelyn, who were continuing the discussion, and went across.

"I wonder if you've seen the G.H. collection of West Indian prints. They might amuse you."

He took Boyeur upstairs to the room where the prints were hung. They were eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century color prints, with a charming period quality. They had not the accuracy of photographs but they had "the feel of the place." There were several of Santa Marta.

Boyeur peered into them, noting this change and that, pointing out this inaccuracy and the other. The fort was not as large as that, the bay was not as narrow. "And look at the church; the spire's half that height." He took a pride that was touching in the island of his birth. He resented any distortion of its landscape.

Archer pointed to a print of Antigua.

"That's my favorite of the lot," he said.

It showed a red brick, two-storied estate house, beside a windmill, against a background of low, rounded hills, with a team of Negroes bare to the waist, cutting the cane, while long-skirted native women with bright shawls and headdresses piled the stalks onto a cart. It had a pastoral charm, an air of happiness.

"On a well-run plantation they did not have too bad a time," Archer said.

"Probably a better time than they have now," David answered. "They had no worries. They were looked after. But they've been given freedom and power now. They're the top dogs. They've got to realize it. That's what I'm doing for them, showing them how powerful they are. The right to strike. That's more important than a vote."

He spoke, so it seemed to Archer, with a mulish, stupid stubbornness. One thing was clear: Margot had been right. It was best to do nothing with Boyeur if one had the slightest doubt of what was the right thing to do.

"A slave mentality. That's what's wrong with these people," Boyeur was continuing. "They were slaves, half of them, in Africa before they were ever shipped here. They don't understand freedom. Teach them their power. That's what we've got to do."

That's what *I've* got to do, Boyeur told himself. Teach these stuck-up prigs a lesson. They had tricked him, brought him here on false pretenses; led him to think a party was being given in his honor, to celebrate his engagement.

"When you rang me up, you said that H.E. wanted to have the dinner on a night that I could come. You said he wanted an opportunity of wishing Muriel and myself good luck. Did H.E. tell you to say that?"

"Yes."

"But that wasn't the real reason for the party, was it? He wanted to get me at the same table as the Fleurys. He wanted a showdown about that Leg. Co. meeting. That was the real reason for the dinner, wasn't it?"

"Yes." Archer did not hesitate. There was no point in lying when you were unlikely to be believed.

"As I thought," said Boyeur. "As I thought."

They had taken him off his guard, staged their showdown and made him shake hands with that conceited puppy Maxwell Fleury. But he'd show the whole pack of them where they got off. Tomorrow he'd demand of the Planters Association a twenty percent rise in wages for field laborers; he'd give them a three-day ultimatum. And if they didn't come to heel he'd call a general strike. He'd held his men in long enough. They were impatient, straining at the leash. And in the temper they were in, a general strike wouldn't be a mere staying away from work. Men like that wouldn't sit idle before their huts. There'd be incidents, slashed tires, flaming cane fields, gutted *boucans*.

CHAPTER 12

BOYEUR's ultimatum was delivered at ten o'clock next morning.

It was the sole topic of conversation two hours later in the Jamestown Club. Bradshaw happened to be there.

"Is there any chance of the planters agreeing?" he inquired.

"None at all."

"Will Boyeur call the strike off?"

"It's very doubtful. He's bluffed before. He'll find some way of saving face. There'll be a conference. We'll concede him something. Then he'll tell his followers that a wise shopkeeper always puts a high price to start with, so that he bargains down, not up."

"I see."

But Bradshaw did not agree. If the issue were put to Boyeur in a way that challenged him . . .

He called upon Boyeur after lunch.

"Do you know what they're saying about you in the Club?"

Boyeur laughed when Bradshaw told him.

"What did you say?" Boyeur asked.

"I didn't say anything, but I know what I thought."

"What did you think?"

"That you can't afford to call 'Wolf, wolf' again. The planters say you've kept this strike like a joker, up your sleeve, for a long time. They're beginning to say that it isn't a joker at all: only the deuce of diamonds."

"Thank you for telling me," Boyeur said.

Bradshaw went straight to the cable office. He had already written out his copy for the *Baltimore Star*:

"David Boyeur, who was expelled from the Leg. Co. meeting for breach of manners," it began, "has taken his revenge by issuing an ultimatum to the Planters Association: a twenty percent wage increase for all field laborers or a general strike in three days' time. The planters think Boyeur is bluffing again, but he is not. Though no one believes it in Santa Marta, the general strike will begin on Friday. It may lead to serious disorder. No man can tell what will happen. Boyeur's prestige is at stake. The Governor is a soldier. He is accustomed to striking swiftly and striking hard."

Two days later, when Bradshaw's article reached the Colonial Office in London, the Minister read it with irritation. These wretched little West Indian islands were like mosquitos, trivial and maddening. He wished a tidal wave could submerge the lot of them, leaving the three big islands and British Guiana as a manageable proposition.

Templeton had complained that the Minister was getting jumpy. He was. A Cabinet reshuffle was imminent. No one knew whose head would fall.

The situation had changed since he had given Templeton his instructions last September. The wave of nationalism was getting out of hand, not only in the British colonies but in the French as

well. Morocco was a tinderbox, and events there were influencing the nationalists in British Africa. A go-slow directive had been issued to the Colonial Office.

"We don't want any trouble," the Minister had been told, "but if there *is* trouble, we want you to come down hard on it." Damn Santa Marta, he thought.

Templeton was the kind of man who might open fire on a mob. Nothing like that must happen. Better forestall the danger by an immediate show of force. There was a destroyer in the Caribbean, the *Cheltenham*, on a training cruise. Best send it straight to Jamestown.

He spoke to the Admiralty, then cabled Templeton not to worry; the *Cheltenham* was on its way.

When the cable reached Santa Marta its recipient smiled. What a panic the Minister was in! Still, it would be reassuring to have a man-of-war at anchor.

That morning he told the Executive Council the news. To his surprise, it proved anything but welcome.

"Nothing could do more harm to our plans for attracting tourists to the island." Norman voiced the general feeling. "This will scare tourists away. Look what happened in Grenada."

In Grenada recently there had been a general strike. There had been incidents on the estates, stones had been thrown in the streets, a warship had been hurried to the rescue, tourists had been evacuated and it had taken the tourist trade there several seasons to recover from the bad publicity.

The Governor was impressed. He drafted a signal to Whitehall:

Tourist Board convinced unexpected arrival of warship will scare away tourists as happened Grenada. Earnestly request you cancel orders Cheltenham but ask captain to keep within half a day's sail of Santa Marta and in radio communication.

AT BELFONTAINE Maxwell watched the Prestons' station wagon curve down the road. Mrs. Preston and the children were moving to Jamestown for the duration of the strike. They had heard drums in the hills; there had been fires in the cane fields.

"I suppose they are really right," he had said to Sylvia.

"I suppose they are."

In his own mind he had no doubt they were, yet he was chained by a complete inertia. Danger might be imminent, but it was still several hours distant. There was a ghostly silence over the estate. He had gone out as usual before breakfast to the *boucan* for the morning roll call. Nobody had been there but the manager. They had discussed the various problems incidental to the strike: pigs had to be fed, horses watered. There were a few estate boys who were not Union members, but they would knock off work on the least provocation. They had to be closely supervised. Beyond that there was nothing to be done. The coconuts would lie where they fell. The cocoa pods would rot. They could only wait. He had returned to breakfast with the prospect of an empty day ahead of him. But it was a pleasant prospect. Nothing to do and Sylvia to idle with.

"Why don't we take our lunch down to the beach?" he said.

"Why don't we? Let's go right now."

The beach was empty. In Jamestown Sylvia would not have worn a Bikini. But here she did. They swam, then sat on a rock and threw pebbles at a tree stump. Then they swam again. "Time for lunch," he said.

Sylvia had prepared a chicken salad, and mangoes to go with it. This was the only way to eat a mango, she maintained: on a beach, in a Bikini, when you didn't mind how the juice dripped or what it stained.

Lunch made them drowsy. They laid out their towels on the sand and fixed up their empty lunch bag as a pillow, but the sand flies began to settle and bite the moment they were motionless.

"It's no good," she said, "we'd best go back."

It was in a honeymoon mood that later, after she had napped and they had showered, they sauntered together round the out-buildings to see if the animals had been fed and watered. "It's nice without any of the workers here. It seems so much more our own," she said.

But that night Maxwell was wakened by the sound of drums. The room was dark; the moon had set. He raised himself upon his

elbow and looked at the bedside clock. Five minutes to five. The men must have been up all night. The moon had gone down at three. They usually stopped when the moon went down. That, though, was when they were at work. Now they could sleep all day.

Slowly, rhythmically, with the maddening rhythm that never reached a climax, the dull thud of the drums beat across the cane fields. It tore one's nerves, fired one's blood. Would it never reach a climax? Night after night of this, followed by long days of slumber, what effect might it not have on men who were used to long hours of manual labor in the heavy sun?

Sylvia had to go home. There was no doubt of that. He lay back on the pillow, his hands clasped under his head, waiting for dawn, for the thud of the drums to cease. He was in a mood that he had heard described as "happy-sad"; the honeymoon was over, but at least he had known what a real honeymoon was like.

THEY LEFT shortly before nine. Maxwell was to return that night, as Preston had the night before.

"The animals would starve if I wasn't here to see they are fed," he said to Sylvia, "to say nothing of how much would be stolen from the house."

He spoke lightly. It was easy to speak lightly now. Now when the sun was mounting in the sky it seemed impossible for any misfortune to befall Belfontaine. But four hours earlier in the dark, with the drums beating, that had been another matter.

"I'll try and work out something with Preston, so that we can work in shifts," he said. "Don't be surprised if you see me in town again tomorrow night."

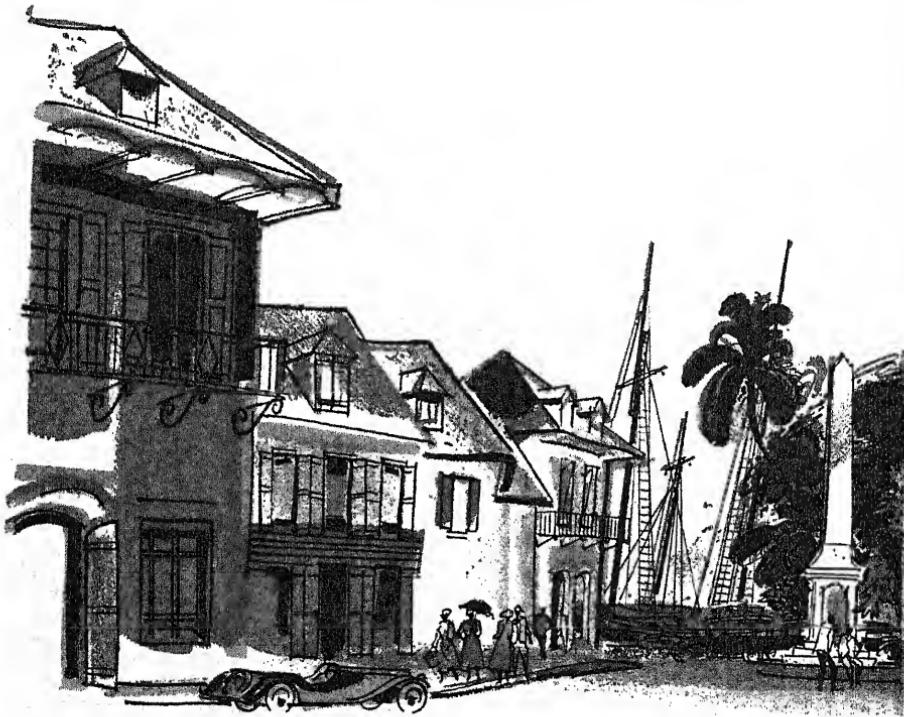
But even as he said it, he knew that he would not be there. There would be no peace of mind for him in Jamestown with Whittingham waiting, watching. He had a "last time" feeling as he drove along the windward coast.

They arrived in Jamestown at quarter to eleven. His eyes brightened as he drove over the saddleback hill above the *carénage*. It was a clear sunny day with the trade wind blowing. A sloop with its sails furled was slowly steering through the pass. Groups of long-

shoremen were seated on the wharf, swinging their legs over the side. They were on strike, but they came down as usual to loll and chatter by the bags and barrels. Nothing was changed. There was the habitual air of picturesque inaction.

He drove through the town, dropped Sylvia at the house, and started back to see his father at the office. On his way, he met Denis Archer. Archer stopped.

"Have you any news for H.E.? How are things out there?"



"They're all right so far."

"Good. I'll tell him that."

Archer was about to move on down the street, but Maxwell checked him. Archer had always been friendly; he'd like to do something for him.



"Listen," he said, "I've thought of something. I'll be rather lonely at Belfontaine. Why don't you come out one day for lunch?"

"That's very nice of you."

"Just ring up when you feel like it. And if there's any girl in whom you're interested why not bring her out with you?"

"That's an idea. I'll take you at your word."

"Do that."

HE WENT from the office to the Jamestown Club. He did not mean to stay there long. But his curious "last time" mood was still upon him. There were loose threads to be snipped off, a final impression to be left.

He arrived shortly before twelve and the Club was crowded. He paused in the doorway looking round him. Whittingham? No, Whittingham was not here. But Boyeur was, standing aggressively self-conscious by the window, within full view of the street and of the library across the way. Maxwell went across to him. This was a loose thread all right.

"How's your strike getting on?" he asked.

"You should know better than I. You're in the trouble area."

"You wouldn't think so, if you came out there. They're as happy as clams. They're having a holiday with pay. They beat those drums of theirs all night; then they sleep all day. What more could they want? It's paradise for them."

"This is only the phony war. You wait till the Union funds run low."

"Then they'll come back to work."

"Oh, no, they won't. Not on the terms that you imagine. They'll come back on their own terms, with a good many planters very sorry that they didn't accept my terms to start with."

His voice was raised. Attention had been attracted and a group was forming round them. It was what Maxwell wanted. He had known there were some loose threads here, but he had not known which. "What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"That's obvious. After a month or so, if the planters still hold out, the strike pay will be reduced. When the strikers have to tighten

their belts you can expect trouble. They'll be hungry and they'll remember that the planters have stacks of food stored away."

"And they'll see you driving round in your MG, wearing smart clothes, and they'll know that you're eating well at the Continental on their subscriptions. How'll they like that?"

He said it sneeringly. It was fun baiting Boyeur. The two young men stood facing each other, loathing each other with that basic unreasoning hatred that only those who carry chips on their shoulders can feel for those who have hurt their vanity.

"My people know me, my people trust me. They know who are my enemies. And when the burning starts, they'll know which houses to set the torches to."

Maxwell laughed. "Now we all know where we are, don't we?" he said and turned aside. He had known there was some unfinished business. He had kept calm and Boyeur had lost his temper. What could have been more satisfactory?

He reached the police station shortly after two. Whittingham was alone, with a heap of files upon his desk.

"I've brought you back *Crime and Punishment*," Maxwell said.

"Fine. You see what I mean now, don't you?" Whittingham swung round in his chair, pivoting himself against the bottom drawer. "The criminal has to give himself away. He can never shake off the memory of his crime. It haunts him all the time. First of all the detective suspects, finally he knows."

"But he had no proof. Raskolnikov would never have been caught unless he had confessed."

"Ah, but that's the point; the criminal is always impelled to a confession; until he confesses he is psychologically a prisoner. Look at it this way. Most murders are committed as a means of escape, by someone who feels himself imprisoned by lack of money, a rival in love, a wife he no longer loves. He cannot live fully till he is free. That is what he tells himself.

"What happens, though? The very opposite. He escapes from one prison into another, a much worse one. He is imprisoned by a sense of guilt, by a fear of discovery and worst of all by his loneliness. He has a trouble which he can confide to no one. That is a terrible thing, to have a secret that you cannot confide. Anything is tolera-

ble that can be shared. That is why marriage is necessary for most of us; someone to share things with. There's a poem I read once:

*You will die unless you do
Find a friend to whisper to."*

He repeated the quotation slowly. His voice was mesmeric.

"The loneliness, think of the loneliness of it. Put yourself in his position. He has exchanged one prison for another."

Maxwell nodded. How well he knew what it was like inside that prison! Who knew better than he did?

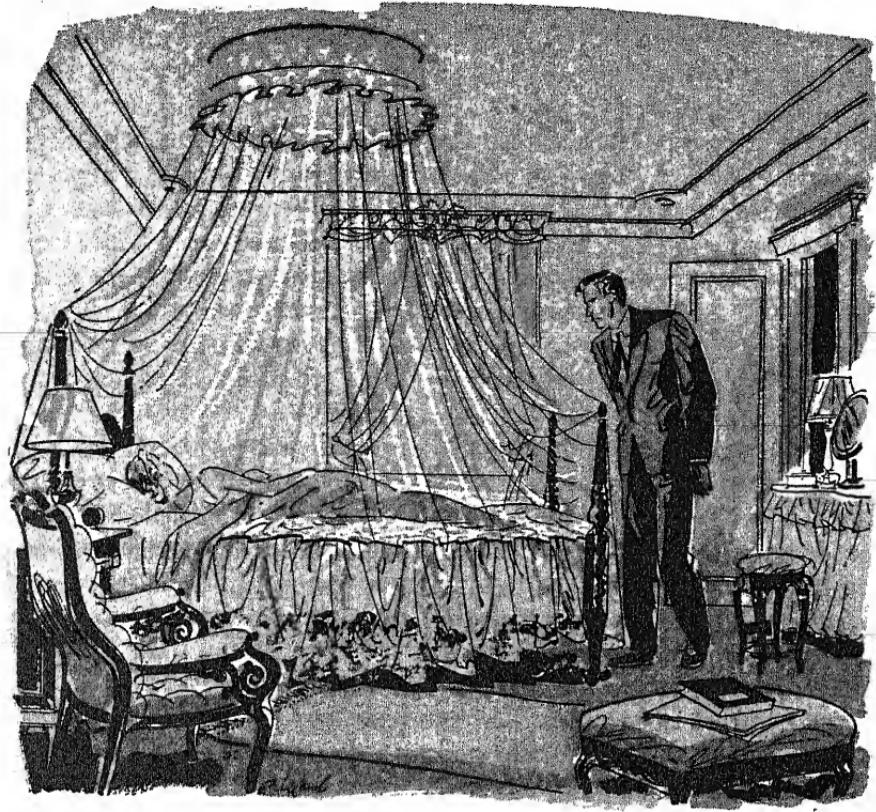
"He's still in a prison," Whittingham's voice droned on. "And there's only one way out of it, confession. That's where *Crime and Punishment* is so sound. Raskolnikov longs to confess. He's not strong enough to carry the burden of his guilt. In his heart of hearts he prays to be found out. The police station is a magnet to him. That's how I think of that poor devil who killed Carson. I mean poor devil, too. I'm sorry for him, I think of him, out there in the districts, or here in town, with this burden on his conscience.

"And do you know how I feel?" Whittingham continued. "I want to go up to him and take him by the arm and tell him not to worry. 'I'll do my best for you,' I want to say to him. 'Tell me the way it happened. We'll get it fixed as manslaughter. That might only mean five years and the sentence could be remitted for good behavior: it might only be three years. That may seem a long time now, but three years pass very quickly.' "

What a relief it would be, Maxwell thought, to throw off his burden of isolation; to break down this barrier of false pretenses! One day the burden would become too great. Whittingham was right. One day he would break free from this prison of his isolation. One day but not now, not yet. The burden was still supportable.

Maxwell stood up. "I mustn't waste your time. Besides, I've things to do. I want to get back to Belfontaine before it's dark."

IT WAS half past two. He said he had things to do, but he had not really. Only a few parcels to pick up. He collected them and drove back to his father's house.



He went upstairs. Sylvia's door was held open by a wooden wedge. He tiptoed into the room. Sylvia was asleep, breathing quietly, her face turned away from him, veiled by the mosquito net. She looked very lovely and he yearned to join her, but he held back the impulse: good-bys were best avoided. He looked at her, and his heart was heavy.

Twenty minutes back, trembling in the passage outside Whittingham's office, he had longed for the day when he could step out of his encasing prison. Now, looking at his wife asleep, he recognized that never, never could he inflict that shame on her. Their child must not bear that stigma. Never, never could he draw the arrow from his side, even though the wound was festering. He must leave his child a name that could be honored. Sylvia, lying there

asleep, looked so defenseless. Her life was his to mar. He must carry his burden till he died.

AT BELFONTAINE, the hours dragged. Maxwell was safe, for the moment, but he knew he could not keep this up for long. On Wednesday week there was the Leg. Co. meeting in Jamestown. He would have to go in for that. Someday, too, the strike would end, and he would resume his familiar routine, exposed once again to Whittingham's incessant scrutiny; at the mercy of his subconscious self, exhausted more and more by the longing to be free, the longing to confess, to get it all off his chest. I don't stand a chance, he thought. I'm licked.

There was just one way out of his troubles.

He sat on the veranda, the day after his return, after a night of brooding. He imagined the news of a disaster at Belfontaine being brought to Jamestown. He pictured Sylvia receiving it. She would be desolate, heartbroken; but she was young, she was attractive. She would get over it. She would marry again within a year or two. But nothing would efface his memory. He was the man who had taught her love, had revealed her to herself. His child would be brought up to honor him. His grandchildren would honor him.

He could hear them talking about him at the Club. He knew how they had felt about him four months ago. On the eve of the Governor's cocktail party he had looked at himself in the glass, wondering what was wrong with him, what put people off, why no one liked him. It was different now. Silence did not fall on a group the moment that he joined it. Men came up to him when he stood alone. They would say friendly things about him in the Club. Whittingham would be silenced. Whittingham would have been foiled. He enjoyed picturing the look of disappointment on the police official's fat silly face.

For the sake of exercise, he walked into the village. It looked exactly as it always did, lazy, listless, picturesque. Naked and half-naked children were tumbling in the dust before their huts; women cooking over their stove ovens at the back, shouting to their neighbors. Through an open doorway he could see a man stretched on a bed asleep; groups of men stood gossiping outside

the liquor shop. Some of the men wore gaudy American beach shirts; some of them wore army khaki shirts that were torn and patched. They looked very happy, and the dotted rows of shingle huts looked picturesque under the shade of palms and mangoes, against the light green of the cane fields and the dark green of the foothills. Visitors from Europe and America were appalled by the squalor of these one-room huts, but they were adequate for the needs of simple people; at night all they asked for was a small dark fortress whose windows they could nail up against evil spirits. They were well enough, these people, for the moment, till education developed different needs in them. Boyeur moved too fast; his appeal was not to their needs but to their cupidity.

Maxwell went on to the jetty and sat at the end, swinging his legs over the side. The sea was rougher than he had thought, looking at it from his veranda. He was a strong swimmer, but he doubted if he would be wise in a sea like that to swim beyond his depth.

Suppose he swam out to the horizon. It would be reported as an accident: no scandal, no shame would be attached.

How easy it would be! When they had discussed suicide that evening at G.H., no one had suggested the obvious answer: swim out to sea till your strength failed.

He raised the point next day when Archer came out for lunch, bringing Margot. They had taken a picnic to the beach, the same beach to which he had taken Sylvia on that last day together. It was a warm, sultry morning, and the sea looked calm and friendly and inviting.

"It would be very easy to swim out there till one was too tired to swim any longer. Why didn't one of us suggest drowning that night at G.H. when we were talking about suicide?"

"I thought of it," Archer said, "but I don't think it's a good idea; it takes too long."

"Why's that a drawback?"

"One might change his mind."

"Is that likely? If a man's made up his mind?"

"Do we ever do that, without mental reservations? The will to live is very strong. It can suddenly reassert itself; one would start

swimming back, or shout for help. I believe there's only one way to do it. Something instantaneous that gives you no time to think, jumping off a skyscraper, or taking strychnine. Think of all the people who start taking sleeping pills, but don't take quite enough."

"You seem to have given the matter a good deal of thought."

"Who hasn't?"

"I haven't." The denial came from Margot. It was quite a while since she had spoken. She was a silent but an easy guest, alert and interested, looking from one to the other as each spoke. Maxwell was pleasantly conscious of her presence, and much of the two men's conversation was addressed to her. They turned to her now, with curiosity.

"Do you mean to say that you've never wondered how you would commit suicide if you had to?" Archer asked.

"No, I've always known that things would turn out all right."

"Have you all that faith in your Obeah man?"

She shook her head. "It isn't that. It's just that I just know."

"I hope that nothing's going to make you feel any differently," Maxwell said.

They went back to the house after lunch. Archer chose a long chair on the veranda for his siesta. "I like my sleep to be unpremeditated," he explained. "If I go to bed and make a parade of it, I stay awake. But if I take a novel to a long chair after lunch, my eyes close and I fade out peacefully."

Margot curled up on the canvas swing seat. She could always fall asleep whenever she wanted and could stay awake as long as there was anything to stay awake for.

"I'm not that adaptable," Maxwell said. "It's bed for me."

But though he undressed and changed into pajamas, though he closed the jalousies, darkening the room, his brain was racing. "Something instantaneous, that gives you no time to think"; but nothing like a revolver that would carry its rebuke of proof. A suicide that did not look like suicide. What other solution was there? Whittingham held every card.

What a solution war would be! How easy to discover in battle a fate that was instantaneous, something that did not give you time to think. There was no equivalent in peacetime. Unless . . .

He checked; a sudden idea had struck him: a possibility. No, not a possibility, a certainty. He felt of a sudden serenely jubilant. He had the answer; the way of settling every score, with Whittingham and Boyeur, with his past, his present and his future. Why had he not thought of it before? It was all so very simple. He closed his eyes. For the first time in four months he knew complete peace of mind.

ONE MORNING the next week, Maxwell woke with his mind fresh and clear. He had gone to bed at half past nine. He had drunk two rum swizzles before dinner and nothing afterward. He had never felt better in his life. He had never felt more conscious of being alive; of being able to enjoy the fact of living.

"Live this day as if thy last." When he had sung that hymn as a schoolboy, he had wondered whether, if he had known a certain day was to be his last, he would have spent it, as the writer of the hymn imagined, in prayer and meditation and good works. Wouldn't he rather have tried to extract from each moment the maximum of enjoyment?

He walked to the stairs and called down to Matilda, "Tea in five minutes."

How good was that first cup of tea with a thin slice of white bread and butter, in the cool of the morning, seated on a veranda with the cane fields fresh and green and sparkling, with the dew not yet dried out of them. It's the last time, he thought. I must make the most of it.

He ordered a couple of soft-boiled eggs for breakfast "and fry the bacon till it's so crisp that you can crack it." It was American bacon, from a tin. He had been keeping it for an occasion. It had never tasted better than it did this morning.

He rang up Sylvia. It might be the last time he heard her voice. That knowledge made him reluctant to hang up, made him talk with a deeper tenderness. He arranged to see her in Jamestown on Sunday. "Do you know that it'll be over a week since I've seen you?" he said.

"That isn't my fault. I'm ready to come out any time."

"Not twice in a day, darling, on the rough road."

"I don't see why it should have to be twice. There's no danger, nothing's going to happen."

"I'll be a better judge of that after tonight. Boyeur's making a speech out here, and I'm going down to hear him. I want to judge the temper of the crowd."

"You'll be careful, won't you?"

"You bet I will be, with Sunday only two days off." This was what he had to do; he must make it look completely unplanned.

"I'll probably ring you late this evening. To tell you how the meeting went. Till then, my sweet, I'm missing you."

He stood pensive by the phone. This might be the end; it might not be. He must behave as though it wouldn't be. He must make the most of every second.

After breakfast, he drove round to Preston's. They discussed the mood of the village.

"They're all right now. But heaven knows what they'll be like tonight," said Preston, "after that damned man's been at them."

"I'd thought of going down. Will you be there?"

Preston shook his head. "I'd lose my temper."

"I'll be tempted too, but I feel I should go down, as a witness, to see the kind of thing he says to them. It may be useful ammunition at the Leg. Co."

Tomorrow Preston would be recounting that conversation in the Club at Jamestown. He would embroider the episode. "We nearly went down together," he would say, "but I felt that I couldn't stomach it. I wish now I had gone down with him."

BOYEUR's meeting was fixed for half past five: the last hour of daylight. Maxwell planned to get there shortly before six. Boyeur would have warmed up by then, so would the crowd. He sat on the veranda, watching the sun sink lower in the sky. He was restless and impatient.

Twenty past five. Where would Sylvia be? At the Country Club, or waiting to start for the Country Club.

He walked across to the telephone, spun the handle, lifted the receiver. There was a babble of voices. The party line again. He hung the receiver back, and returned to the veranda. He heard the

sound of a car upon the road, traveling fast. He craned his neck. At the turn of the road, between the palms, he saw a flash of yellow. That was Boyeur's new MG. How could he afford a car like that? Out of Union funds; out of contributions wrung from laborers. Boyeur, that cheap upstart.

His temper rose again. His fists clenched. He could use a drink, but caution counseled him against it. There must be no taint of alcohol upon his breath. He must allow no loophole for the defense of a drunken brawl.

It was twenty-five to six. Boyeur would have started speaking now, unless he was too grand to be punctual.

Maxwell crossed into the hall. The party line should be clear by now. It was. He gave the operator the number again. There was a silence, interrupted by a faint buzz-buzz. Then a high-pitched West Indian voice. No, Mistress Sylvia was not at home. She go Country Club.

"O.K., Susan. Tell her I called. Master Maxwell. No, no message. I'll call later. Give her my love."

When would Sylvia get that message? Half past eight? Would she know by then?

HE PARKED his car a hundred yards from the meeting. He stood at the back of the crowd. Boyeur must have been speaking for about twenty minutes. His voice was hoarse; his audience was shouting applause at the end of every sentence. The crowd had become a single person, obedient, mesmerized, his to do what he chose with.

"The planters have declared war on us," he was crying. "They have refused our demands, our just demands. We must return war with war. They have forced us to strike. Because of them, the strike has gone on and on. Our funds are not exhausted but we must divide them, so that no matter how long the strike lasts we shall have funds to fight the planters. They cannot hold out forever. We may be hungry for a little, but they will be ruined and the land will become ours. We have worked the land; because of us the land is rich. By right the land is ours."

Boyeur paused and the screams became vociferous. So Boyeur

had cut down the strike pay to get quick results. He needn't have, but he hadn't the temperament for waiting. He wanted immediate action. Well, he'd get it. More than he expected, more than he bargained for.

"The planters, those Sugar Barons, have declared war on us," Boyeur was continuing. "In war there are no rules. In peacetime you may not steal, you may not plunder. But in wartime it is not stealing, it is not plunder to take the goods that an enemy is not strong enough to defend."

A shriek of applause went up. Yes, this was it, Maxwell told himself. Incitement to violence, incitement to robbery.

Was there a policeman here? Maxwell wondered. Probably there wasn't. Local police had the sense to keep away from trouble. But he must have witnesses. Someone who would testify tomorrow.

"War is war," Boyeur was repeating. "There are no laws in wartime."

Another minute or so, Maxwell told himself. Hysteria was mounting round him. It was going the way he had planned. "Something instantaneous. Something that didn't give one time to think."

"The land is yours, the houses upon the land are yours. Take what you need, destroy what you cannot use. It is yours, yours, yours; to take or to destroy. Yours, yours, yours."





A scream answered each shouted "Yours." This was the moment. Maxwell drove his elbows sideways into the ribs of the laborers at his side. "Out of my way," he shouted.

His voice drowned the hubbub. With his elbows working fast, to left and right, he forced his way toward the table on which Boyeur stood, and jumped upon it. It was a long trestle table, such as is found in army barracks, fifteen feet long and a yard wide. For a moment he faced Boyeur. There was astonishment and indignation in Boyeur's face. "You here," he said.

Maxwell laughed; the blood was pounding in his veins. He had done that something instantaneous. He had no time to think now, only to act. He had reached the point of no return. Beyond Boyeur's shoulder, he saw the local constable coming out onto the veranda of the police court. So he had his witness. All was well then.

He turned from Boyeur and faced the crowd. There were at least a hundred of them, staring up at him with stupid gaping mouths.

"Don't you believe him," he yelled at them. "There is all the money you need. But Boyeur doesn't want you to have it. He wants to keep it for himself. He wants to spend it on himself, on his clothes, on his women, on that fast sports car over there. Look at him. Look at those clothes. How can he afford such clothes, such a car? Because he has your money: the five cents that you give out of your pay each week. That's how he buys that car, those clothes. That's where your money goes. Now when you need your money, you cannot get it, because he spends it on himself. Look at him now. Look . . ."

"Stop. Listen." Boyeur pushed himself forward to the edge of the table; with his arms outstretched he appealed again to the inflamed temper of the crowd.

"Don't listen to him, don't believe him. He is one of your enemies. A planter. One of the Sugar Barons. He and his type have lied to you all their lives. They have tricked and robbed you. They stole you from your families in Africa. They brought you in slave ships across the ocean. They kept you in chains, they beat and tortured you. They denied you human justice."

It was the familiar jargon of the West Indian demagogue. Maxwell made no attempt to interrupt him. Let Boyeur work upon the mob, and he, in his turn, would goad Boyer to the final act of folly that would be his undoing.

"He calls himself one of you," Boyeur was shouting, "because he has one minute particle of African blood in his veins."

Maxwell smiled wryly. A small particle indeed: so small that no one had ever known of it till Bradshaw broke the story, but enough to bring him all this trouble.

"He says he is one of you," Boyeur was shouting, "but he is not one of you. Look at him. He looks like a white man. He is a white man in all that counts. He is on the other side. He —"

Maxwell pushed forward. It was time to interrupt, time to goad the crowd, as he had goaded Boyeur.

"He's right," he shouted. "I'm not one of you. I belong to the

white people. But I have that fraction of colored blood in my veins, and because I have it I can understand you. I know what you are worth, I know what you are good for. You were brought here to work as slaves; you were slaves most of you in your own country first. That's what you are: slaves. That's what you still ought to be."

The answering roar of fury delighted him. It was what he wanted.

"You are idle, stupid, ignorant. You can't think for yourselves. You follow the man with the loudest voice. You all voted for me at the elections. Now you listen to this cheap popinjay."

Shriek after shriek greeted every pause. He was following Boyeur's technique, pausing at each full stop. They were out of all control. Another minute, he thought, and they'll be ripe.

"Slaves you were and slaves you should be. Slaves you are, following a thing like this."

He turned and swung round facing Boyeur. You must keep your head, he warned himself. Picture the witness standing up in court. You've got your witness watching from the darkness of the station. This mustn't be reported as a brawl. All the responsibility must lie upon the other side.

He glanced back at the angry faces. "The white people flatter you," he shouted. "They tell you that you're as good as they are. I know how wrong they are. You're idle, dishonest, stupid. Get back to work while you still have the chance. Before troops are landed and you're sent back in chains. Don't you forget it, you're still slaves at heart."

The crowd was like a cageful of beasts at feeding time. Now, he thought, now's the moment. He swung round to Boyeur. Boyeur had lost control, just as the crowd had done. He only needed the final prick of the goad. Maxwell leaned toward him. No one but Boyeur must hear what he said. There must be no extenuating circumstances. He dropped his voice.

"You," he said, "whose girl walked out on him the moment a white man raised his little finger. How long do you think you'll hold that Muriel of yours? Only till something better comes along. Someone with a better skin."

He hissed the final word. He saw Boyeur's face contort, saw

his right arm swing back. He made no attempt to guard himself. A blow struck without provocation, against unclenched fists.

The blow struck him below the eye. He staggered, off his balance; he put back his foot. It missed the edge of the table and he fell. He flung out his arms, and his hands clutched at a bare, damp shoulder, his nails gripped for a hold.

This isn't true, this can't be happening, he thought.

He was half stunned, but his fall was broken by a human wall. As his feet grounded, he struck out. A huge hard-knuckled fist crashed against his ear.

"Let him have it, boys!" Boyeur's voice rang clear, breaking through the fog of pain that obscured Maxwell's senses. Maxwell gloated at the sound of it. Ah, that was what he wanted, the final testimony; Boyeur's score was settled and so was Whittingham's. The blows crashed in on him from every angle of the narrow ring that hemmed him. His knees were weakening; he was half conscious.

But Boyeur was brought down, Whittingham foiled, Sylvia saved, their child's honor saved. Sylvia. He heard her voice with its new note of tenderness. He felt her head's weight upon his shoulder, saw her hair scattered on the pillow. Why had this had to happen? Why, why, why?

Through half-dimmed eyes he saw the red glow of sunset on a cutlass, saw it and saw nothing more.

CHAPTER 13

CARL BRADSHAW wrote his last article about Santa Marta in Virginia, where he was spending a week before his return to Baltimore. Nothing that he had written in his whole life had given him greater satisfaction. His prophecies had come true. How often could a journalist make that boast? And he was returning to Baltimore on his own terms.

"The news of Maxwell Fleury's death reached Jamestown at seven o'clock by telephone from the local constable who witnessed the incident," he wrote. "The Governor took the action to be expected of a general. He mobilized the police and drove out in

person to the scene. David Boyeur was in the police station. The Governor carried a warrant for his arrest, and Boyeur was brought back in handcuffs. Boyeur was placed in the front of an open jeep, so that everyone along the road could see him. Before he arrested Boyeur, the Governor declared martial law, announced that the strike was ended and ordered all field laborers and longshoremen to report for work next morning. It is doubtful whether he had the legal right to do this, and it is possible that on some of the estates the peasants might have refused to return to work. But at four o'clock this morning a British destroyer steamed into Jamestown harbor. The arrival of the ship, coupled with the arrest of their leader, has convinced the proletariat that the authorities intend to be obeyed.

"I will make no attempt to assess future probabilities," Bradshaw continued, "but note certain facts: The Governor's son is engaged to be married to Jocelyn Fleury, the sister of the dead man. The Attorney General's sister is engaged to be married to David Boyeur. Humphrey Norman, one of the Governor's chief counselors, is chairman of the Tourist Board and chief shareholder in the St. James Hotel; it is in his personal interest that an example should be set that will reassure the tourists. He was also Maxwell Fleury's father-in-law. The name of another figure close to the Governor has been linked to that of a colored girl long associated with Boyeur. It would be hard to find a situation in which the personal relationships were more entangled. High affairs of state are as often as not determined by the personal equation."

And that was that, thought Bradshaw. Santa Marta was now a closed chapter in his life, and he was on his way to fame and fortune.

IN THE Governor's study, five men were at the moment deliberating the killing: the Governor, Whittingham, Grainger Morris, Humphrey Norman and Julian Fleury. The constable from Belfontaine was recapitulating his evidence. Whittingham put the questions.

"Could you hear what David Boyeur said in his speech to the crowd before Maxwell Fleury interrupted him?"

"Not the actual words, sir, but the general argument." The constable gave the gist of the speech.

"Was it very violent?"

"Mr. Boyeur is always violent."

"Was the crowd excited?"

"The crowd is always excited when Mr. Boyeur speaks."

"Were you yourself watching all the time?"

No, he had stayed inside his office, listening. He had not come out till Mr. Fleury made his interruption.

"But after the interruption you saw and heard everything?"

"Yes, I saw and heard everything."

"What did Maxwell Fleury say?"

"He told the crowd that they were idle, sneaking, good-for-nothings, that they ought to be slaves."

"And the crowd got angry?"

"Very angry."

"Did any of them have cutlasses?"

"Yes, sir, several."

"Do you remember which men had cutlasses?"

No, he could not remember.

"What about Boyeur? How did he take Fleury's interruption?"

"He gets very angry. He interrupts Mr. Fleury. He shouts him down. He says that Mr. Fleury is one of the enemy."

"Did he threaten Maxwell Fleury?"

No, the constable could not say that he had done that.

"What happened then? Did Maxwell Fleury interrupt again?"

"Yes, and called him names. And then Mr. Fleury leans forward and says something I can't hear; and —"

"What's that? Something you can't hear?"

"Yes, up to then each shouts, but this time Mr. Fleury leans forward and whispers something. And then Mr. Boyeur punches Mr. Fleury, and Mr. Fleury falls back into the crowd. And that's the last thing I do see, the table is in the way. There is a lot of shouting and something seems to be happening. And then I think I had better go and see what happens, and . . ."

"Wait a moment. What was David Boyeur doing all this time? Didn't he try and stop what was happening?"

"No, sir, I don't think so."

"Did he stand there, silent? That's not like him. Didn't he shout out anything?"

"Yes, sir, he shout something."

"What did he shout?"

"I can't tell, sir, there is so much noise."

Grainger intervened. "I see your point. You cannot be absolutely certain of what you heard, so you prefer to say nothing. You are afraid of bearing false testimony, is that it?"

"Yes, sir. That is it."

"And if you were in a court of law, giving evidence on oath, you would be quite right to say that you did not hear what Mr. Boyeur said. But you are simply telling us unofficially what you saw and what you think you heard. By comparing four or five different versions, we may discover what Mr. Boyeur actually said. You see my point?"

"Yes, sir, I see your point."

"Then I think you should tell us what you think you heard."

Again the constable hesitated. "Sir, I cannot be sure."

"Yes, yes, we understand."

"Well then, I think he said, sir, 'Let him have it, boys.'"

There was a gasp from Humphrey Norman. The Governor glanced at Julian Fleury. There was no expression on his face. Grainger nodded at Whittingham. It was the Colonel's turn.

"When you reached the meeting, what was Boyeur doing?"

"Staring at the corpse, sir."

"He'd stayed on the table all the time?"

"Yes, sir, all the time."

"Did he say anything?"

"They've killed him,' that's all he said. He kept repeating it. He was dazed. He stood there staring. I asked him who had done it. He shook his head. 'They've killed him,' he kept on saying that. 'They've killed him.'"

"What was the crowd doing?"

"Staring at the corpse."

Whittingham and Grainger exchanged a glance. They could picture the scene. Boyeur on the table, dazed, and the people in a

half circle gazing at the corpse with a fascinated, frightened horror.

Who had swung that cutlass? That was the vital fact and how was that to be discovered? Boyeur might know. But Boyeur would not dare reveal it, for the man would assert inevitably that he had been incited by his leader. "Let him have it, boys." Neither Whittingham nor Grainger had the slightest doubt that the constable had heard correctly. They would never find the killer. But a charge of incitement to murder against Boyeur might be maintained.

"You have told us," Grainger said, "that Maxwell Fleury leaned forward and spoke in a low voice to Boyeur. The next thing that happened was the blow struck by Boyeur that knocked Fleury into the crowd. Was that the only blow that Boyeur struck?"

"Yes, sir."

"Before that happened had there been any threatening gestures made by either party? Had Fleury clenched his fists or framed up as though he meant to fight?"

"No, sir."

The constable was dismissed. "I trust," the Governor said to him, "you do not think because we have asked you all these questions that we are in any way criticizing you. You acted with intelligence and initiative; it will appear upon the record."

As the door closed behind the constable, Templeton turned to the advisers. "Now, gentlemen, your opinions. Julian?"

Julian Fleury shook his head. "I've nothing to say. My son is dead. Justice must take its course."

"Mr. Norman?"

Norman had a great deal to say. An incident like this, following on Carson's murder, would do an incalculable amount of harm to the tourist trade. American and Canadian tourists would have the idea that a white man was not safe here. There was only one way in which that impression could be dispelled. Drastic action must be taken to show that authority had been re-established.

He spoke for a dozen minutes. The Governor listened, nodding from time to time; as a junior officer, after a tactical exercise, he had listened to sergeants and corporals explaining the reasons for their actions. He always let them talk themselves out.

"That's a very interesting point of view," he said finally. "A dollar shortage is one of the Empire's greatest problems. The tourist revenue is of great importance. At the same time, the Attorney General will, I am sure, remind us that expediency plays no part in the demands of justice. Colonel Whittingham, do you consider that on the evidence you and your police can collect you will have a case strong enough to warrant a prosecution on a charge of murder?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then in that case, Mr. Morris?"

Grainger hesitated. "There's one thing that puzzles me," he said. "Perhaps Mr. Fleury could help me with it. It has become quite clear that there was genuine ill feeling between these young men. I wish I knew the cause of it. Perhaps Mr. Fleury knows."

Julian Fleury looked surprised. "Why do you say that? They hardly knew each other."

Grainger gave his reasons, ending with the incident at the Leg. Co. meeting.

"On that occasion, sir, Maxwell Fleury deliberately goaded Boyeur."

"How can you say that?" This came from Fleury.

Grainger addressed the Chair. "Is Your Excellency aware of the precise sting in the remark of Fleury's that drew Boyeur to his feet?"

"I'd like you to give me your interpretation of it."

"I can give you the facts, sir. You have working in your secretariat a girl called Margot Seaton. She was Boyeur's mistress for two years. She is now the mistress of your A.D.C. Boyeur is very touchy about having been supplanted by a white man."

The Governor smiled. He had been taken off his guard; but he was accustomed to shocks. He was not going to show he had been.

The young scamp, he thought, getting his girl invited to that dance. It was at the dance that she had wangled her post on his staff. She must be quite a person. He did not know that Archer had it in him.

"There was very definite bad blood between the two," Grainger continued. "There's this to be considered too. What was young

Fleury doing at that meeting? It's most unusual for a man in his position to go to that kind of meeting. And if he did go, why did he interfere? It must have been a personal thing. That's why I want to know what Fleury whispered to Boyeur. A great deal hinges upon that. How much was Boyeur provoked? I'd like to know the whole back history there."

The Governor asked Grainger to stay behind after the meeting. "Don't think I don't realize that this is very difficult for you," the Governor said. "This is your test. People are undecided about you. Many consider I made a mistake in appointing so young a man. Whichever way you act in this case, you will be criticized. But I want to assure you of this. You have my complete confidence. Whichever way you decide to act, you have my support."

GRAINGER usually lunched off a sandwich at his chambers. But today was different. He needed to see Muriel.

When he reached his home, she rushed to meet him, her eyes swollen and dark-rimmed.

"You'll be seeing David, won't you, this afternoon?" he asked.
"Of course."

"There's something I want you to find out for me," he said. "I want to know what the feud was between Maxwell Fleury and himself. I also want to know what Maxwell said to make David lose his temper. You know what happened, don't you?"

"Please tell me. I don't know the details."

He told her roughly. He did not want her to know too much. He did not want David to know how much he knew.

She listened with a strained, uncomprehending look. She could not believe that this was happening to her David. "Nothing can really happen, can it?" she asked imploringly.

Grainger shrugged. "It'll be for the jury to decide. It'll be a help if you can find out what the trouble was between him and Maxwell."

BAIL had been refused to Boyeur, but he was allowed to receive visitors without police supervision. He had had his clothes sent round to him, and he looked smart and spruce that afternoon for

Muriel's visit. He strode into the reception room as though it were a drawing room.

"Isn't it absurd?" he said. "Fancy arresting me. I had nothing to do with the fight. I was on the table the whole time. It happened so quickly that I couldn't even see what was happening."

"You didn't see who killed him?"

"How could I? There were twenty all at him at once."

"But why did you knock him into the crowd?" she asked.

"I didn't knock him. I pushed him. He lost his balance."

"You didn't know him at all well, did you?"

"Hardly at all. I can't say I liked him much. Surly, stuck-up fellow. Why are you worrying on that score?"

She felt lost and helpless. She did not know what her brother had in mind, but she had faith in him and great respect for him. He must have a reason for having asked her to probe this problem.

"I'm sorry. I was curious," she said. "The story I'd heard was that Maxwell Fleury jumped up on the table and began to abuse you to the crowd, then he whispered something to you directly, and you hit him hard in the face and he fell off the table."

"Is that what they are saying? You know how stories grow. Yes, he did abuse me to the crowd, and he did whisper something to me."

"What did he whisper?"

"I can't remember. It's unimportant. The whole thing's silly. I'll be out of here by tomorrow. Nichols was here this morning. He's the best lawyer in town, after your brother. He quite agreed with me. Don't worry about it any more. I still may be able to make tomorrow's picnic."

Grainger looked serious that evening when Muriel recounted her interview with her fiancé. But he did not let her guess where the cause of seriousness lay.

Pushed, not punched. And he couldn't remember what was whispered. He did not like it. He needed Whittingham's advice.

"BOYEUR's trouble is his vanity," he told Whittingham. "He's so vain that he'll cut off his own head rather than appear ridiculous. And Maxwell Fleury was a problem too."

"He was a very peculiar man."

"He used to be arrogant. He was surly, he was anti-black-man and he wasn't any good at his job. Then suddenly he changed. He became affable, cheerful, a good mixer."

"Did you notice when this change began?" asked Whittingham.

"About four months ago."

"That's right. It started clearly on a certain day; it was the day that article of Bradshaw's appeared about the Fleurys having colored blood."

"Do you attribute that change to Bradshaw's article?"

"It must have had some effect."

The two men looked at each other. Grainger had the feeling very strongly that Whittingham was holding something back.

"Have you any idea yourself as to the reasons for this feud?" he asked.

Whittingham shook his head. "I've none at all. Why are you so anxious to clear up this point?"

"If Boyeur was provoked beyond a reasonable point, then I'm not sure that a prosecution would be justified," Grainger said. "It may have been an accident. Maxwell may have been to blame. But if on the other hand Boyeur, having worked the crowd up to a pitch of hysteria, knocked Maxwell over into them and shouted, 'Let him have it, boys,' it's like a lion tamer keeping his lions short of food, then pushing a man into the cage."

"I see your point."

"Do you think I might go down and see Boyeur?"

"I don't know who's going to complain if you do."

Grainger went down that evening. Boyeur looked shy and apprehensive though his manner was flippant.

"Have you come to let me out?" he asked.

"Not yet. There are one or two things I want to ask you."

"Fire away."

"When Maxwell Fleury held his first election meeting, you organized a demonstration that made him look ridiculous. Why?"

"He was a bumptious, meddlesome ass. Why should he interfere in politics? It was no business of his."

"At Carnival, his car was put out of action and his fields set on fire. Do you know anything about that?"

"I know a great deal about a great many things."

"Were you responsible?"

"I can't help it, can I, if my friends dislike my enemies?"

"So you admit he was an enemy?"

"Not at all. But they may have heard me say he was meddling, and that's enough for some of them. I have a business keeping them in control. The sooner I'm let out the better, if you want to keep this island quiet."

"You don't seem to have managed to keep it very quiet last night."

"That was Fleury's fault. Shouting abuse at me, at them. You know what a West Indian crowd is like. A man was killed in Trinidad last Carnival."

"It was you who pushed Fleury off the platform."

"He asked for it, shouting out all that abuse."

"And then whispering that insult?"

"I'll say so."

"What was that insult, by the way?"

"What insult?"

"The one he whispered, when he put his face up close to yours."

"He didn't whisper anything."

"But you've just said he did."

"I didn't."

"Now, listen, David, this is serious. I won't say your life depends upon it, but your next five years may. It's very important that you should tell me what Fleury whispered to you."

"Why should it be?"

"I shan't tell you that. But the whole case might turn on it."

Boyeur did not reply. He was a little frightened. He respected his future brother-in-law and was in awe of him. He ought to tell him what Fleury had whispered. But to stand up in open court and admit that anyone had dared say a thing like that to him—no, he couldn't face the shame. And how would Muriel feel? She couldn't think of him with the same respect again.

"He didn't say anything in particular. I can't remember exactly what he did say. I saw that silly face of his, gibbering up under mine. I pushed it and he lost his balance."

"And that's what you are going to tell the jury."

"Precisely."

"Then I've no more to say."

Grainger took his leave so abruptly that Boyeur was more than disconcerted. He was close to being frightened. He had the sense of a last chance gone. A constable tapped him on the shoulder.

"You must go back now," he said.

Boyeur followed him meekly to his cell. He sat on the iron bed with its rough straw mattress. This can't happen to me, he thought. I'm David Boyeur.

It was close on eight o'clock when Grainger returned to his father's house. Muriel was waiting for him with a look of questioning anxiety upon her face. He shook his head.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I've no news for you."

He was tired by the strain of a long day. It was unjust that his first important case should be involved with family considerations. He had never felt lonelier in his life. If only he had someone to talk it over with; if only he had here some of the friends he had made in England. If only there was one person in the island to whom he could speak openly: one person.

The telephone was ringing in the hall. "It's for you, Grainger."

He rose wearily, but it was not the official voice he expected.

"I shouldn't be bothering you now, but I wanted you to know that you have all my sympathy. I know how difficult it must be for you." The voice was quick, a little breathless.

Mavis Norman. And only a second earlier he had been thinking that there was not a person in the island to whom he could speak openly. "Are you busy?" he asked. "I mean now; this moment."

"We've just finished dinner. No, I don't think I am. Why?"

"I'll be round within ten minutes. I'll take you for a drive."

He drove her to the Morne St. James, above the fort. With his arms crossed over the wheel, he leaned forward, looking across the sea.

"At the moment you rang up," he said, "I was thinking there wasn't a person in the island to whom I could explain myself, to whom . . ." He checked. He was afraid that he might say too much. He changed his tack.

"H.E. said to me this morning that, whatever I do now, I shall be criticized. If I prosecute, they'll say I've turned against my own people, that I've taken the white man's bribe; and if I don't prosecute, they'll say that I've let family interests influence me. But whichever way I decide, I don't want you to misjudge me. I've not yet made up my mind, but I want you to realize this: that it would be far easier, in the long run, for me to do what looks the more difficult to do. If I put Boyeur behind bars, within a year colored people will be saying, 'That's an honest man. He puts justice first. He's not afraid of ruining his sister's future in the cause of justice.' But if, on the other hand, I feel there isn't a real case against Boyeur, as well I may, they'll say, 'He put his sister first.' Do you see what I mean?"

She did not interrupt. She sat listening, curled in a corner of the car, looking at his face in profile.

"I can't tell you what it means to me, being able to talk to you like this," he said.

She had the sensation of something under her heart going round and over. Yet at the same time she thought, Unless I'd rung up, he'd never have thought of that. It should have been he, the man, who took the initiative. The fact that he hadn't made him special for her, made her special for him. He was not timid and bashful. It was because of his social separation from her that he had not called. It would always have to be she who took the first step. Always.

NEXT MORNING Grainger again went round to Whittingham.

"I've still no clue as to what really happened," he said. "But I'm sure Boyeur's lying. And if I know him, he'll lie in court and the jury won't believe him. He's sticking to the story that he only pushed Maxwell. We've got the constable as a witness that he punched him. I could get a conviction, I'm sure of that. At the same time, I can't help suspecting that Maxwell deliberately planned this thing, that he wanted something like this to happen. He goaded Boyeur. He didn't expect to be killed, of course; but he wanted to have something so shocking happen that Boyeur would be finished. How do you feel about it? Is what I'm saying nonsense?"

Whittingham shook his head. "It isn't nonsense at all. Maxwell Fleury was a very peculiar man. I don't say you're right in concluding it was an act of vengeance, but it does seem more than likely that whatever he whispered was in the nature of a challenge; that he knew Boyeur would strike out at him."

"If you think that, it's good enough for me."

Grainger called on the Governor that evening. "I've come to hand in my resignation, sir."

He stated his reasons. "I believe," he said, "that a prosecution against Boyeur would succeed. Boyeur would behave stupidly in court, and the jury would not believe him, which is what the other members of the Council want. They are demanding an example. They want to convince the world that there is a strong government in Santa Marta. That's what they think, sir; and I believe that's what you think too."

"And why do you think they're wrong?"

"Because if Boyeur were convicted, an injustice would have been done. And an injustice always results in a reciprocal injustice. Boyeur would come out of prison, eventually, full of hatred. The injustice that had been done to him would convince other young men that they cannot expect justice in our courts, that they would be smart to take the law into their own hands. A heritage of hate would be created. In my opinion, sir, there's only one cure for the maladies that afflict this whole area: impartial justice, respect for the law, a belief in the mind of every single person that he will get square dealing before the bench."

"That is what you genuinely believe."

"Yes, sir, that's what I genuinely believe."

"Then I'm not going to accept your resignation. I knew I'd picked a winner when I picked you. I'll back you up on this, my boy. I don't say you're right, but you stand for the right things. That's more important."

THE CABLE from Santa Marta announcing Boyeur's release reached the Colonial Office on the morning before the arrival there of Bradshaw's article about the riot. The Minister read the cable with concern. There would be questions in the House on this.

It could not have happened at an unluckier time. Kenya, Malaya, and now Santa Marta; British subjects being killed and no reprisals taken. The British public was getting restive. So was the Opposition. So for that matter were his colleagues.

The next day the Minister received Bradshaw's article. He read it with stupefaction. This was worse, much worse than he had feared. How could Templeton have been so blind? He'd got to come back. He couldn't be left there any longer. He himself wouldn't know a moment's peace. Trust the man on the spot; yes, that was all very well in principle. But it was the man who appointed the man to the spot who was ultimately responsible. He had taken a risk when he had appointed Templeton, a soldier and a cricketer, over the heads of career colonial officials. He had had a good press at the time. The Government had been congratulated on its wise appointment. But that was nine months ago. The honeymoon period was over.

He rang up the War Office. "Have you thought of anything that's at all suitable for Templeton?" he asked.

"As a matter of fact we have. Commandant at Sandhurst. It's right up your man's street. He'll jump at it. It's a Major General's appointment that confirms his temporary rank. That makes it a promotion."

The Minister closed his eyes with relief. He was out of the woods. A lucky escape. He'd be on guard another time. How could one tell, though? There were so many irons in this fire.

ON THE following morning, Lord Templeton received two cables from London. The one he opened first was from the War Office. It offered him the appointment of Commandant at Sandhurst. It informed him that permission from the Colonial Office had been obtained. It hoped that in the interests of the service he would accept.

The other one was personal, from the Minister. WAR OFFICE MOST ANXIOUS YOU ACCEPT APPOINTMENT COMMANDANT SANDHURST HATE TO LET YOU GO AFTER YOUR FINE WORK FOR US BUT FEEL MUST NOT STAND IN WAY YOUR OBVIOUS INTEREST ALSO NATIONAL INTEREST.

Templeton smiled wryly. Did they think he was a half-wit? He sent for Euan and handed him the cables. His son looked at him questioningly. "What are you going to do?"

"Accept. It amounts to an order. A year ago, I should have been delighted. But I hate leaving a job before I've finished it."

"When do you expect to return?" Euan asked him.

"Almost at once. I'll be needed for conferences at the Colonial Office. There'll be a good deal to tidy up."

"I see." Euan frowned, pensively. "In that case, Father—" He paused. "Is there any reason why Jocelyn and I shouldn't get married here before you leave? Then we could all go back together. . . . It's completely unreasonable, but I can't help feeling that if we don't get married now we never shall."

"And you are very anxious to be married?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"In that case then . . . if you can persuade Jocelyn, I'm sure I can persuade her parents."

"I'll see her right away."

Templeton watched his son hurry from the room, then began to draft his cables of acceptance. He wrote them sadly. He had not lied to Euan. A year ago there was no post he would have welcomed more than that of Commandant of Sandhurst. He would have regarded it as a high privilege to have been allowed to implant his ideas in a new generation of cadets, particularly at such a time as this when a new and democratic army was being trained.

In five months' time, again in the saddle, he would be a happy man. He was well aware of that. But at the moment he was oppressed by failure. He had come out here so hopefully ten months ago. He had meant to do so much for Santa Marta. He had seen his three years here as the coping stone of his career. He was being recalled after ten months. There was a saving of face, but he had failed. There was no denying that.

THE FOLLOWING morning, after breakfast, Jocelyn followed her mother into the small drawing room.

"I've something to say to you," she said. Her face was serious. "I'm going to be a nuisance, I'm afraid."

"What's this all about?" her mother asked.

"I want to go to Canada," she said.

"Canada. Why on earth should you want to go to Canada? You haven't quarreled with Euan, have you?"

"By no means, he wants to marry me at once, before he goes back to England."

"But he's not going to England till October."

"He is, there's been a change of plan. His father has a new appointment, a military one. I only learned it last night. That's why I've brought this up now. A certain amount of pressure will be brought to bear on you, but you can make this Canadian visit an excuse. You can say that you'd like me to have an autumn there, while Euan gets settled into Oxford. It's what his father really wants. Then in the new year I can write from Canada that I've changed my mind."

"Jocelyn, you can't ruin your whole life like this. Are you still in love with Euan?"

"Yes."

"Then what on earth's to stop your marrying?"

"The danger of seeing a colored man in the House of Lords."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"I'm not being ridiculous. It wouldn't matter for a soldier, or a lawyer or a politician. But a peer! Think of all the jokes there'd be about it. Think of how the boy himself would feel. He'd grow up twisted. I wouldn't inflict that on my worst enemy, let alone my son."

"Is that the only reason why you're refusing to marry Euan?"

"It is."

"And if you had a chance, if things were different —"

"But they're not different."

"Let's put it another way. When Euan was trying yesterday to persuade you to marry him right away, would you have given anything to have been able to say yes?"

"I would."

"Then in that case I've got to tell you. You need have no qualms about marrying Euan Templeton. You have not one drop of African blood in your veins. My husband is not your father."

"Daddy not my father? Then who—"

"It's better for you not to know. He is completely English; you can rest assured on that point. I will tell Lord Templeton who he is; he has a right to know. Telling him will be the most difficult thing I have ever done. It will be the price I have to pay for something I've regretted all my life. But I don't see why my husband need know. It would break his heart."

Jocelyn found it hard to believe what she was hearing. Her parents had seemed so devoted. She had never conceived the possibility of another man in her mother's life. Her relief was so intense that she could not face as yet the consequence for her of this revelation. Her whole life was to be transformed. But with her relief was mingled utter astonishment.

"It's the last thing I would have expected of you," she said.

Her mother laughed, a short, bitter little laugh. "You have a lot to learn," she said. "It was the last thing I would have expected of myself, two months before it happened. I had been married ten years. I was happy. I loved my husband. I hadn't a worry in the world. And then this thing happened. It was a brief, fierce lunacy. When it was through, heavens, how through it was. I hated myself, I despised myself for it."

Jocelyn stared at her mother. "No wonder you've never liked me much," she said. Her mother must have resented her very existence, have looked for and been repelled by signs of her father in her.

"When do they expect to leave?" her mother was saying.

"They don't know yet for certain. Within a fortnight."

"Then the sooner this is settled the better. I'll see Lord Templeton this afternoon."

Jocelyn shook her head. She could spare her mother that.

"There's no need," she said. "I don't think Lord Templeton ever worried about it. And if he did, it doesn't matter since it can't happen now."

"But what about Euan? Won't he worry? He may look in his son or daughter for color. He may be unfair to them on that account. And your children. They may learn about it; they almost certainly will."

Jocelyn shook her head again. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. I may have to tell them someday. But we've got quite enough on our hands at the moment decking me out in orange blossoms."

IT WAS half past six. Denis Archer waited in the deserted office for what well might prove his last private talk with Margot. The last ten days had been hectic. There had been the rush of good-by parties, the flurry over Euan's wedding, the arranging of passages, the forwarding of luggage. He had been so rushed that he had very little time to wonder about his own future, for this change was going to affect him considerably.

He had anticipated that he would be working for Templeton for three years. He had worked intermittently on a travelogue, had written half a dozen poems. He had planned to get down to something solid at the start of the second year and return to England from Santa Marta with a novel or travel diary to establish his literary identity. But here he was, about to arrive in London, with a small balance at his bank and nothing to show a publisher. The old boy had said, "I'm afraid this will be a great inconvenience for you. Don't worry. I'll see that you are all right." Which was very decent — and very typical — of him. But there were limits to what the old boy could do.

He had been equally taken off his guard personally. What about Margot? He had seen her too in terms of a three years' appointment. He had never looked ahead. They had discussed nothing. They had lived from one day to the next. He was utterly unprepared for this sudden break.

Impatiently he paced the room. What was going to happen to her? Would she be kept on here at the secretariat? What was there that he could do for her? She had never asked for anything. He had no idea what her home problems were. He'd send her something at Christmas, he told himself; something substantial, that she could keep in reserve for an emergency.

She came in as he thought this, wearing a short-sleeved primrose-yellow sweater, a wide sage-green skirt, with a red belt that he had bought for her in Trinidad. She paused beside him as she always

did, placed her hands upon his shoulders, raised herself upon her toes and kissed him, lightly, but letting her lips linger against his, the way she always did, then dropped back on her heels and stepped away.

A pile of manuscript was on the desk. She paused by it, began to read the top page. "I like this," she said and turned the page.

Denis Archer, seeing her standing there, reading what he had written, had the sudden devastating picture of a life without her, of writing things she would not read. He blinked. He could not face that prospect. This had gone too deep. She was part not only of his life here in this room, but of his life wherever he might be. He could not leave her.

"Have you got a passport?" he asked.

"Yes, I got one when I went to Martinique."

"How long will it take you to pack?"

"Two hours."

"The plane for England leaves on Friday at ten past eleven. I'll send a car for you at half past ten."

"O.K." She had not looked round. She was still reading the manuscript. She lifted another page. "I think this is the best thing you've done," she said.

Her calmness, even after all this time, astonished him.

"You don't seem surprised," he said.

"Surprised at your writing well? Why should I be? I think you will be famous one day."

"I didn't mean that. I meant your not being surprised at our going to England together."

Then she did turn round; and this time there was a surprised expression on her face. "Where you go, I go."

He had in that moment a shattering sense of destiny fulfilled; of simultaneous triumph and surrender; an acceptance of life's challenge coupled with an acceptance of his fate. He knew in that moment beyond any doubt that there was only one thing for him to do. "It would be simplest if we got married before we left," he said.

"You'd know that best." She turned back to the manuscript. "I'd like to borrow this. There's too much to read now."

CHAPTER 14

HALF the population of Jamestown and a large contingent from the districts had assembled to bid Lord Templeton farewell. The airport looked like the racecourse on Governor's Cup day, and Colonel Whittingham had mustered nine tenths of his police force to control the crowd and supply a Guard of Honor.

It was a cool clear morning and the cane fields provided a fresh green background to the garish clothes of the crowd. The fixed bayonets of the Guard glittered in the sunlight.

Templeton had allowed half an hour to say good-by to everyone and to inspect the Guard; plenty of time and not too much time. He disliked last words. During his service he had stood on so many platforms.

Everyone of any consequence had come to wish him well. Their handshakes were firm, there was a warmth in their voices. Were they being overgenial to conceal an undercurrent of embarrassment? Did they realize that he was being recalled? Did some of them feel they had been let down, were being deserted by him? Grainger might well feel that.

"I shall make a special point in my reports of the help that you have given me," he said to him. "Good luck, my boy. I know you've a big future waiting you."

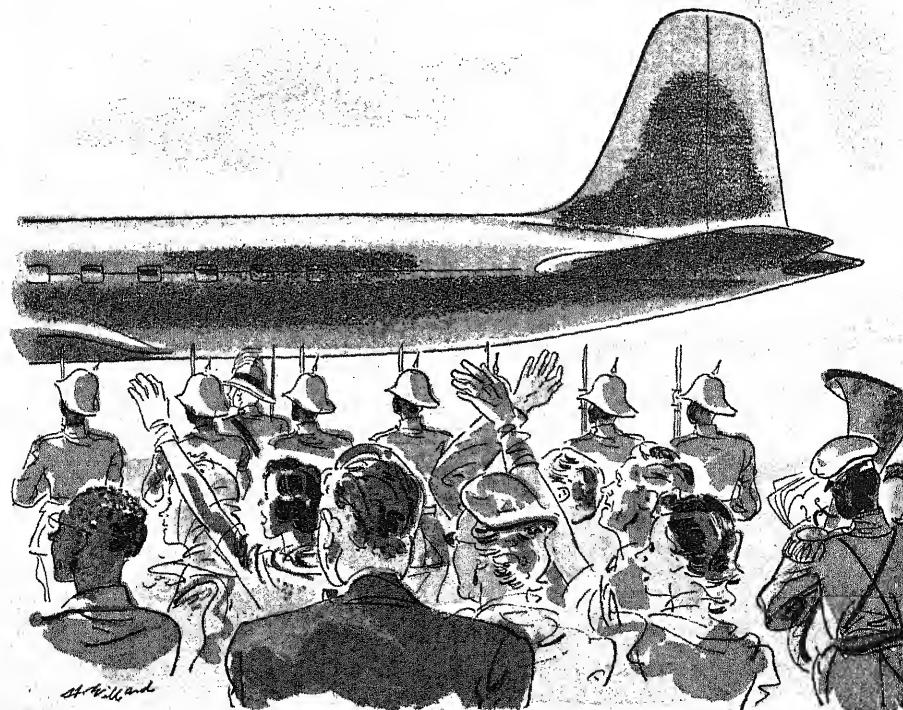
Above Grainger's shoulder he caught a glimpse of Boyeur. He had wondered whether he would come. Boyeur was in a difficult position. The strike had collapsed; there had been no rise in wages. It was generally agreed that he had had an extremely lucky escape. He still held his place in the Council; but there was every likelihood that Union membership contributions would need a lot of collecting. He would have to watch his step very carefully for many months.

Boyeur was standing beside Muriel Morris. So she had stuck by him. Perhaps this might make their marriage a better one. Templeton made his way in their direction. "I'm sorry I shan't be here for the wedding," he said and shook their hands.

The Normans were next, with Mavis; Sylvia was not there. "She sent you so many messages," Mrs. Norman said. "She had wanted to come so much but she didn't feel equal to it."

"I quite understand. She's very right. I've thought about her a good deal. At least she has the consolation of the future."

He turned to Mavis. She looked tired and drawn. Was she a little saddened by Euan's leaving, by Euan's marriage? What had there been between them? He would never know. She might so easily have been his daughter-in-law. What was going to happen to her? The years were passing and she seemed headed nowhere. There were so many girls in the same position in the islands. He felt a pang of sympathy for her and for her problems. She might have become a close, integral part of his own life. Now she was going out of it along with so many others.



For ten months he had been seeing these people every day. Their interests had been his interests. How few of them he would ever see again. Whom for certain besides Julian Fleury? Him he would see often. Likely as not Julian and Betty would decide to sell out here and come back to England. There was little to hold them here now.

He wrung his old friend's hand warmly.

"I'm only saying *au revoir* to you two," he said.

JULIAN FLEURY passed his arm through his wife's as Jocelyn paused, at the head of the plane steps, to wave good-by.

"We're just ourselves together now," he said.

She pressed his arm against her side. To young things like Mavis and Doris she and Julian must appear old fogies, "all passion spent," packages upon a shelf. In many ways, her heart was heavy; but she was by no means sure that the best part of her life with Julian was not starting now.

A few yards away, Doris was chattering exuberantly to Mavis: "I wonder what the new Governor will be like. All the parties that there'll be for him! It *will* be fun. I used to feel so envious of you and Jocelyn and Sylvia, when I was at school!"

Mavis smiled wryly. The Inseparables again. But you couldn't put back the clock. The three Inseparables belonged to yesterday.

Her mother at her side was grumbling over young Archer's marriage.

"It's the most ridiculous and disgraceful thing I ever heard of," she said. "What an example to the island! And with the Governor's approval, in the same airplane as the Governor. It breaks down everything we've stood for."

Mavis made no reply. What was the point of arguing? Good luck to them, she thought.

To her right the band broke into



"Auld Lang Syne." The plane was beginning to move. Whittingham's voice rang out: "Present — Arms!" There was the crack of wrists on magazines. A roar went up from the crowd. Someone shouted, "Three cheers for the Governor!" The plane lifted from the ground, soared high above the cane fields, slowly circled the airport and turned northward.

There they went, thought Mavis. Jocelyn and Euan, Margot and Denis Archer, and the big man himself. She watched the machine grow smaller, a faint and fainter flicker of silver against the pale blue of the morning sky. It had gone, it gleamed again, then vanished; she could hear it when she could no longer see it.

She turned away. The cheering was now a chattering; the crowd started to disperse.

Grainger was only a few yards away and she moved toward him. He welcomed her with that friendly smile that always made her feel that she was someone special.

"How does this change affect you?" she asked.

He shrugged. "I can't be sure yet. But I shall resign my appointment when the new Governor arrives."

"Oh, Grainger."

"It's only fair. A new regime needs new officers. I'd only stay on if I were convinced the new Governor really needed me. But I'm sure he won't. I'd be an embarrassment to him."

"An embarrassment. Why should you be?"

"Because Lord Templeton was recalled, in part because he backed me up in my decision not to prosecute David Boyeur."

"That means the ruin of everything you've worked for."

He shook his head. "It means a delay, that's all; and perhaps everything's gone too quickly and easily for me up to now. Later on this will stand me in good stead."

He spoke with assurance, in an attempt to convince himself as much as her.

"At the moment," he went on, "the colored people are on my side, and the Sugar Barons are against me. Everyone thinks I've taken the black man's side against the white. That isn't true. I've taken the side of justice. There'll come a day when I take action against a colored man, on the white man's side. Then it'll be

remembered that I once took a colored man's side in a key case and resigned my appointment in consequence. They'll learn that I'm impartial. They'll trust me to administer justice."

"Mavis, we're going now."

It was her mother calling. Mavis looked questioningly at Grainger. "Can you drive me back?"

"Certainly."

They walked to the car park slowly.

"What do you think of Margot Seaton and Denis Archer?" she asked.

"It may be the making of him."

"Why do you say that?"

"When a young man marries the kind of girl who is, as they say, 'suited to him in every way,' it often turns out wrong. If a man marries a girl whom the world thinks quite unsuitable, it means that he really wants her. That's the best augury, isn't it?"

"But what about his career?"

Grainger shook his head. "They don't worry about that kind of thing in England. Besides, Archer's going to lead a Bohemian life. Artists are expected to be irresponsible. They provide the color and contrast to existence. An exotic wife like Margot will be an asset. She's very picturesque."

They had reached his car, but it was hemmed in. They stood together, waiting. "Do you think that works the other way?" she said.

"How do you mean, the other way?"

"In a girl's case. Should a girl marry someone unsuitable, if she feels he's right for her? . . . Denis Archer marries Margot. Euan marries Jocelyn. But when it's the other way around . . . is there any difference?"

This course was opposed to all her instincts. Men should initiate. But this case was different. He was the one man who had believed in her; could he not do for her what Margot would do for Denis? This was her one chance, she must speak now.

Grainger stood looking down at her. It was utterly unexpected: he had never dared to dream that Mavis felt like this about him. The prospect dazzled him. But even so . . .

"Why should there be any difference?" she was saying. The car behind his was backing.

"Now's our chance, jump in quick," he said. He was thinking fast, desperately fast. She must be spared the humiliation of a refusal. She must be stopped from uttering the words that in her mind she had already framed.

He set the car in gear and released the clutch.

"It's strange," he said, "that you should ask me about marriage, a celibate like myself; though I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. Catholic priests express themselves strongly on matters of which they can never have any practical experience."

He was speaking lightly, almost flippantly; giving no indication that a few seconds before she had been talking with such fierce intensity. She was puzzled, upset.

"What do you mean, a celibate like yourself?" she asked.

"It's what I am."

For the first time he had fully realized what he had long in his subconscious suspected, that he was as much a celibate as any priest, since for certain dedicated persons there is implicit in their acceptance of a calling the denial of a right to personal happiness. He had as a colored man taken up a cause, a mission. He must never, never accept responsibilities that could claim precedence over that cause.

Slowly, carefully he guided the car out of the park, talking as he drove.

"I don't want to seem presumptuous," he said. "I don't want to make out that I'm important, but there are certain people who can't carry out the work they've set themselves if they accept the privileges and responsibilities of marriage."

"But why are you one of those special cases?"

"Because, if I married, I'd have colored children. All my arguments would be affected by that, and would be weakened. If I stand alone, people will come to realize that I'm a man without an axe to grind, that I am impartial because I can afford to be impartial."

She made no reply. Her hands clenched. She stared at the road ahead. What an escape she'd had! Another minute and she would

have proposed to him. She'd never have dared look him in the face again. She'd never have dared look anyone in the face again.

"Where would you like to be dropped, your house, the Country Club?" he asked.

"Is my house out of your way?"

"Not at all."

"That would be fine then."

He swung north along the bay. The tension was broken. The danger point was passed.

But something more needed to be said. She must be in a desperate state to have reached such a point. Was there nothing he could do, nothing he could say to make her feel happier about herself? Surely there must be something.

Perhaps this was it.

"I had a letter from a friend in England two days ago that made me think of you," he said and his voice was gentle. "He runs an employment agency and he told me that it was very hard to find for certain special and confidential jobs young women with pleasant voices who are prepared to work hard. I thought of you. Why don't you take a trip to England and see what it's like? There's so little to do here that's worth the while of someone like yourself."

He had drawn up outside her house. His smile sent a warm feeling of self-confidence along her veins, that made her feel good about herself.

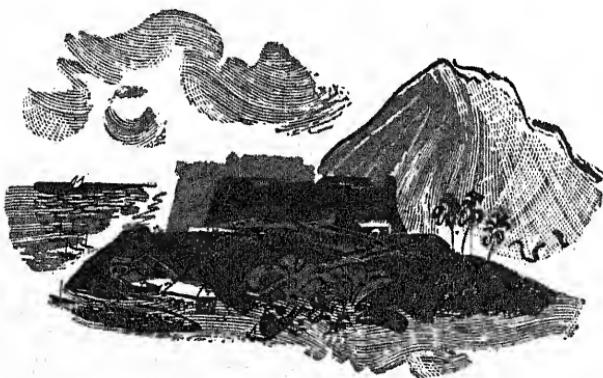
"You could surely manage a trip," he said. "Copra's booming. I'll write to my friend if you like and get some facts. You'd enjoy working if you had a job that you believed in. Why not think it over?"

England. Why not? It was an idea. She'd got so used to hard times on the island that she hadn't realized she could now afford a trip to England. Why not, after all, why not?

THAT NIGHT once again Grainger sat alone upon the veranda of his father's house. He would not be sitting here alone so many more times. That afternoon he had found an apartment near his chambers that suited his requirements. He would sign the lease

tomorrow. Very few renovations were required. He would be moving into it within two weeks. Afterward when he came to this house it would be as a guest.

Peace lay upon his mind. That morning he had felt despondent when he had watched the Governor step into the plane. His fortunes were at their lowest ebb. He was without a patron. In that tense five minutes in the car he had not only solved an immediate problem but seen into the heart of his own constant problem. He knew what that problem was, and how he would have to cope with it. He was ready to take up now, in pride, with courage, the challenge of his lonely destiny.





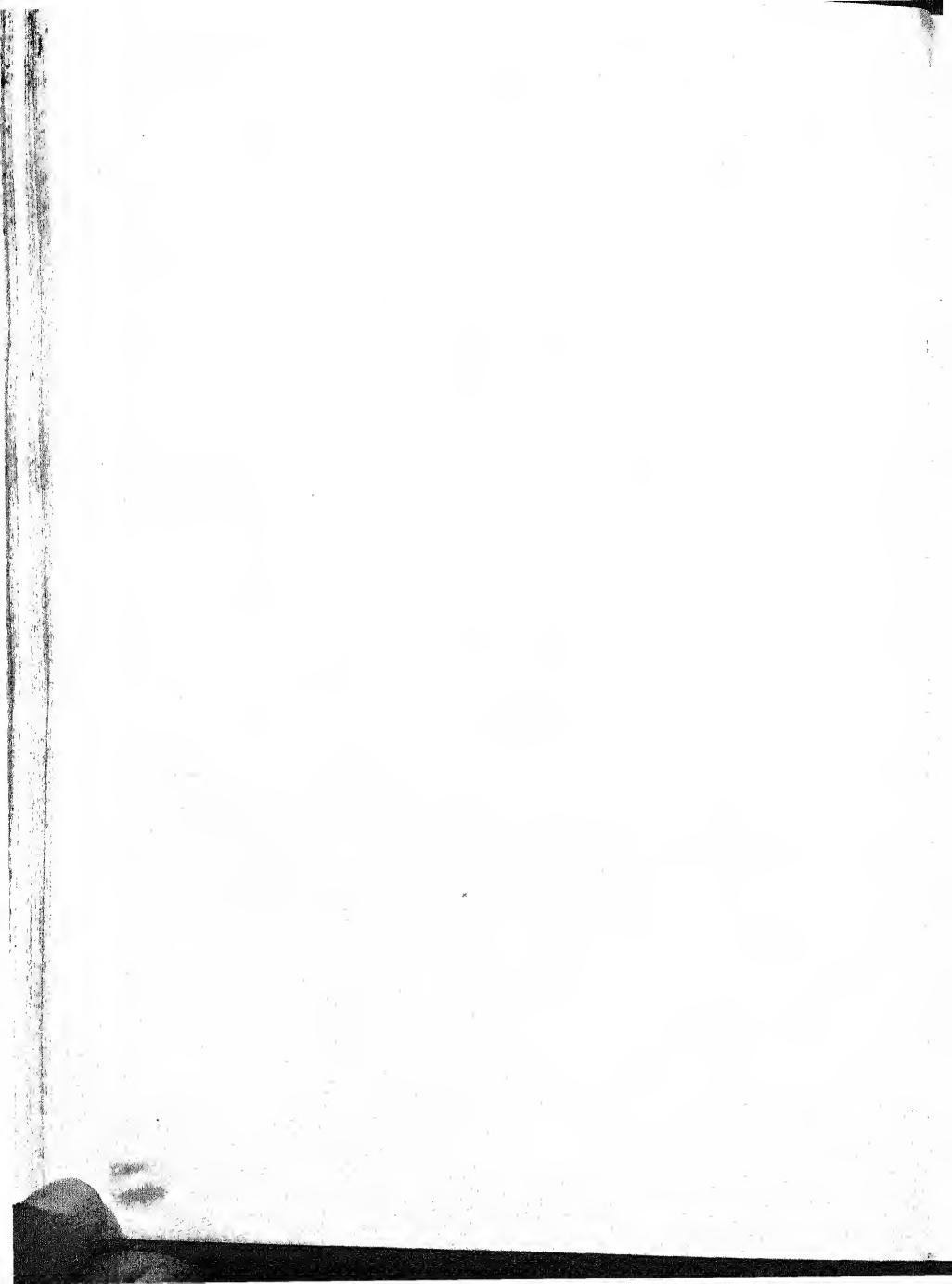
Alec Waugh

BORN in England in 1898, Alec Waugh is a veteran of both World Wars, having left Sandhurst, the Royal Military College, at the age of seventeen to join the army.

A few years as literary adviser in his father's publishing house convinced him that he could not be happy tied to a desk, and the success of his novel *Kept*, in 1925, enabled him to embark on the life of writing and travel he has followed ever since. As versatile as he is prolific, he has spanned the fields of fiction, biography, poetry and travel in more than forty published works.

For one who is equally at home in the South Seas, the West Indies and New York's Hotel Algonquin, it may seem odd that Mr. Waugh does not have a driver's license. His explanation is that when he is at the wheel of an automobile he begins to make up stories and his mind wanders. In the interest of public safety, therefore, he no longer drives!

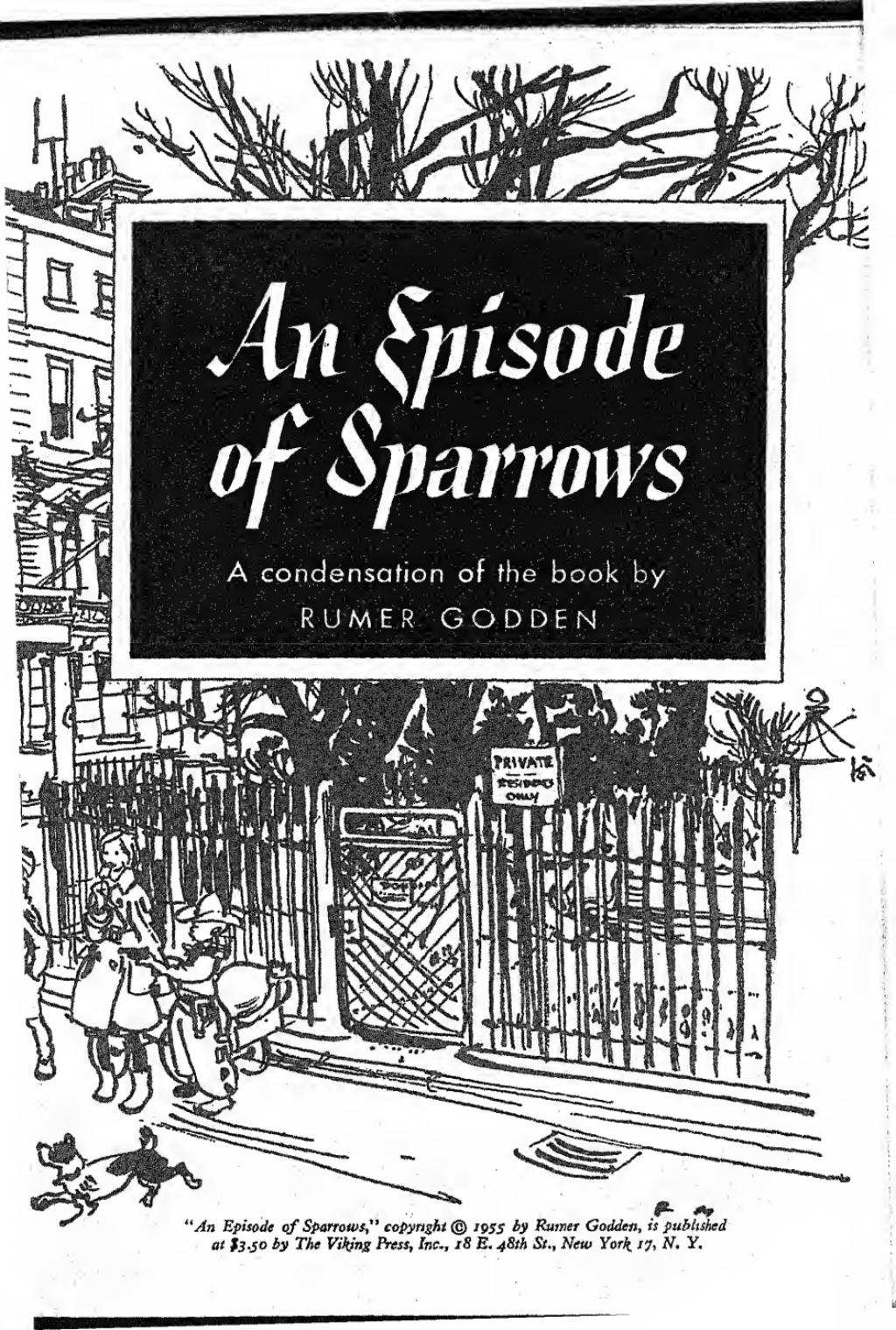
Mr. Waugh is married and the father of three children. His younger brother is the celebrated author Evelyn Waugh.



AN EPISODE
OF SPARROWS



Illustrations by Francis Marshall



An Episode of Sparrows

A condensation of the book by
RUMER GODDEN

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T WAS just a small envelope dropped by a passerby. But for eleven-year-old Lovejoy Mason, who instinctively grabbed for it, it contained the seeds of a small miracle.

Deserted by her mother, fending for herself in London's back streets, Lovejoy combined in her frail person the wistfulness of childhood, the wiles of Eve, and the tenacity of a seedling struggling to flower in a bomb ruin. In her fight to create beauty out of drabness, she drew to herself many an unexpected ally. Tip, the masterful thirteen-year-old gang leader; Vincent, the restaurant keeper, the guardian of elegance; and Miss Olivia, the wealthy spinster, for whom Catford Street was a rich, mysterious world beyond her window.

Poetically and tenderly told, *An Episode of Sparrows* is a story of "ordinary" people whose lives were far from ordinary. It is a story to chuckle over and take to the heart.

CHAPTER 1



THE Garden Committee had met to discuss the earth; not the whole earth, the terrestrial globe, but the bit of it that had been stolen from the Gardens in the Square.

The three members of the Committee were the big gun, as Lucas the gardener called Admiral Sir Peter Percy-Latham, who lived at Number Twenty-Nine, the little gun, Mr. Donaldson, who had the ground-floor flat at Number Forty, and Miss Angela

Chesney from Number Eleven. To Lucas, Angela was not a big or little gun, she was *the gun*; she ran the Committee, she ran the Gardens. "And she won't let us have wallflowers, says they're common. I like wallflowers," said the Admiral, but behind Angela's back; when she was present he deferred to her, as did Mr. Donaldson; Lucas looked only at her; like a court round the queen, thought Olivia. Olivia Chesney was Angela's queer, dark, elder sister, who often attended her. They stood looking at the round pits of holes that had been made in the shrub bed at one end of the Gardens.

"It's the Street children," said Angela. She did not mean any street but Catford Street, that ran behind the Square down to the river. For Mortimer Square, gracious and imposing with its big houses, stood, like many other London squares, on the edge of a huddle of much poorer streets.

"Looks as if an elephant had been standing in the bed," said the Admiral, looking at the holes.

"Three elephants," said Olivia. "There are twelve holes."

"Be quiet, Olivia," said Angela. "It isn't funny. Things are too expensive these days for it to be funny. We shall have to get the police. First the shears gone, then all my beautiful irises!"

They were not Miss Angela's irises, but the Admiral let it pass. "Surely if it's children we can catch 'em ourselves," he said. "It must be children, but what did they want it for?"

"They sell earth for window boxes," said Angela. "People shouldn't encourage it. They can buy earth at the Army and Navy stores."

"But," said the Admiral, looking at the holes, "*can* it be children? How did they cart it away?"

"They ought to have a medal for persistence," said Olivia. They all looked at her, and she blushed.

"Olivia, it's not funny, and it must be stopped," said Angela, and she pronounced, "Lucas must sleep in the shed."

The shed was at the far end of the Gardens, lonely and drafty and cold. Lucas shivered. "Supposing it's one of those gangs?" he said. "They're big tough boys. They've got razors."

"I think," said Olivia, "it's a little boy or girl."

"Nonsense," said Angela. "No little boy or girl could carry all that earth."

But Olivia knew they had; while the others were talking she had seen, under a bush, a very small footprint. She had scuffed it out with her shoe.

CATFORD STREET might have been any poor street in any city — a city that was old and had been bombed — but its flavor was of London; its stucco and its sooty brick, its scarlet buses and scarlet post-office van were London, as were the occasional great shire horses drawing wagons, the strange uncouth call of the rag-and-bone man, the many pubs.

From the high back windows of the old schoolroom at Number Eleven, where, as children, she and Angela and their brother, Noel, had done their lessons and led their private lives, Olivia often looked down at the Street, spread out before her, yet hidden, teeming. At night it was a nest of lights, and it was always filled with sound, endless human sounds, while behind, booming from the river, came the

sirens of the tugs and ships, reminding the Street, thought Olivia, of the world; and, falling down between the house walls, the sound of bells, reminding it of heaven. The Anglican St. Botolph's Home of Compassion was just behind the Square, and hidden somewhere among the houses was a convent of the Sisters of Charity, from which, as long as she could remember, the Angelus had rung three times a day.

Four times a day there was another sound; it came from the red brick school that took up a whole block; at twelve o'clock, at half past three and at recreation times a vast, lively cheeping went up to the sky as the children came out to play. It was this that first made the Miss Chesneys call the Street children "the sparrows."

When two people say the same word it can mean two different things. To Angela they were sparrows because they were cheeky, cocky, common as sparrows; to Olivia nothing was common; two sparrows were sold for a penny, as the Scriptures said, but not one should fall to the ground. It was paradoxical that it was Angela who worked indefatigably for the sparrows on one of her committees, while the sensitive Olivia did nothing.

Angela had tried to make her. "You might at least work for us in the Street as a Visitor," she said.

Olivia thought of asking questions in those swarming, vital houses and was appalled. "I — I couldn't," she said. "They're too rich." She was not thinking of money; to her they seemed rich in everything she had not, children and strength and life.

As a matter of fact, it was Angela who had real riches; she was the one who kept up the big house in the Square. They had all been left their share of the family money, but Angela, who had been a beautiful and a very winning child, had inherited from a rich old bachelor godfather as well. "Be polite to Aunt Angela," Noel Chesney told his children and joked, "Besides being good as gold, she's solid gold."

If anyone were well named, Olivia thought often, it was her sister, Angela. She looked like all the things that went with angels — a candle, a lily. Her hair was still golden — though she's forty-five, thought Olivia with pride.

Angela not only had good looks, she had good works. "By their

fruits ye shall know them" was carved over the porch at St. Botolph's, the big church in the Square: Angela's church. "By their fruits . . ." That haunted Olivia because she had no fruits. How had that happened? Olivia did not know.

If she had ever felt well it might have been easier and different. Her headaches had always been a family nuisance, and she was given to hot, dark blushes that turned her face a mulberry color, and her attacks of indigestion were so sharp of late that she had grown a habit of pressing her hands suddenly against her chest — "like a tragedy queen," said Angela.

Sometimes Olivia wished she had a real illness, something for which a doctor could be called in; as it was, "You think you are going to have a headache, and you do," said Angela.

It was not only her health. "I was born inept and clumsy," said Olivia often. No one contradicted her.

"Olivia is sentimental," Angela would say. "She likes to go back into the schoolroom world." But this afternoon, up here in the schoolroom, Olivia did not go back. Here, high over the Catford Street houses, she was remembering the Garden Committee meeting, the footprint in the garden bed.

As if she had been Crusoe and the footprint a little Man Friday's, she had followed it most of the day in her mind. All day she had wondered whose it was. But there must have been more than one child to carry all that earth, she thought. What were they doing? What did they want?

"Want." It was like a match put suddenly to a pile of tinder. What did I want? thought Olivia. So many things; the things all girls want, and it wrung her to think with what supreme confidence she had waited for them to come.

It was not the absence of a man that Olivia regretted so much, though she could have wished that both she and Angela, who had been too fastidious, had married; but I wish children were not so unknown to me, she thought, looking down on that hotbed of children, the Street. Olivia divined something in children — not Noel's children, who were precocious and spoiled, but in the children who were let alone, real children. They seemed to her to be truer than grownups, unalloyed; watching them, she knew

they were vital; if you were with them you would be alive.

She leaned far out from the window as if to see into all those countless ordinary lives below. I wish I could have one chance, thought Olivia, the chance and the courage — not to have a life of my own, but to join in something real — real, she pleaded.

The house was quiet; at this time of the afternoon the servants were in their own sitting room, in the basement; Angela was in her office on the ground floor with her secretary, Miss Marshall.

Angela was a member of so many different boards and committees that Olivia had long ago given up trying to remember which was which; and in her spare time — she still had spare time, Olivia marveled — she was writing a book. It was only Olivia who was unoccupied and idle. This afternoon, for instance, there seemed no place for her, nothing she need do. She began to think again of the stolen earth and the footprint, and again the questions began. Who were they? What did they want? How did it all begin?

CHAPTER 2



IT HAD begun on a windy Saturday morning in March, in Catford Street, two months before.

Though Catford Street was in London it was a little like a village; to live in it was to become familiar with its people. Sparkey, the newspaper woman's little boy, for instance, knew nearly everyone that passed. Sparkey sat on the steps of the house nearest the newspaper stand. He was delicate, one of those little boys who are all eyes and thin long legs; he was always catching chills, and his mother put a wad of papers under him to keep his bony little bottom off the stone and wrapped a copy of the *Evening News* round his legs; even then he was mottled with cold.

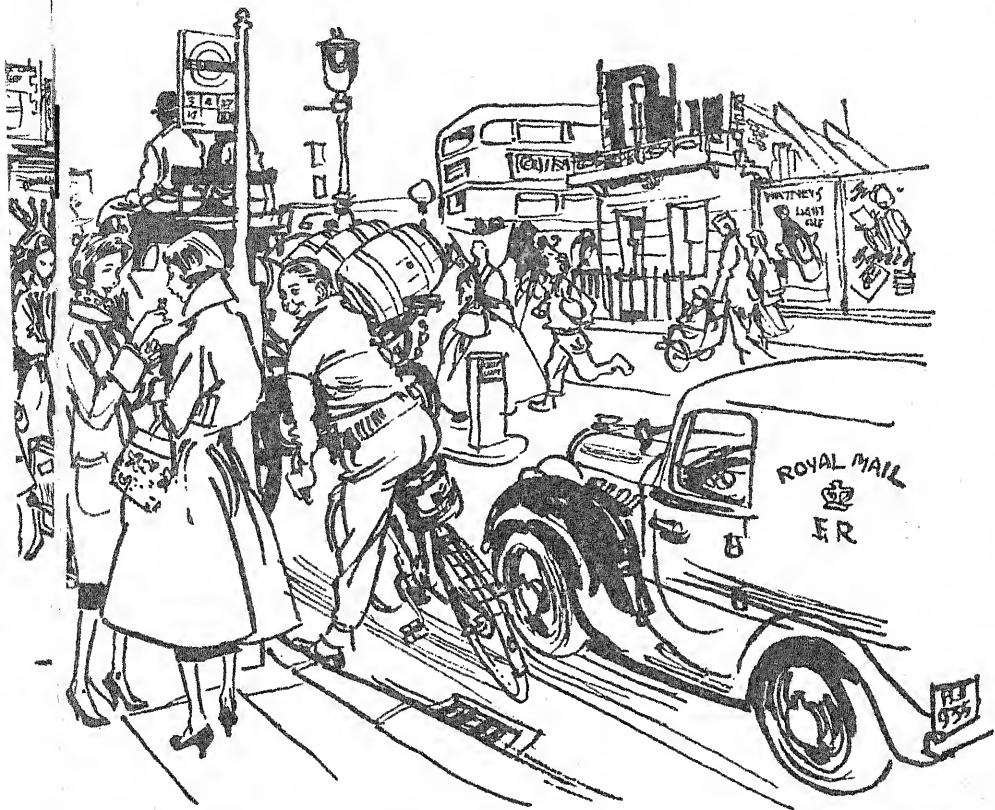
"Why don't you go and play?" asked his mother.

"I like to watch," said Sparkey.



There were plenty of animals in Catford Street; Sid, the log man, kept his pony, Lucy, behind the last house, in a shed by the canal; all the children knew Lucy and her little cart painted with hearts and roses. Besides Lucy and the dogs, there were parakeets, canaries and cats, many cats. In the very house where Sparkey sat on the steps, Mrs. Cleary and Miss Arnot kept fifteen cats.

People passed all the time. There were women with perambulators and children tagging along, holding to the handles; most of the women said "Hello" to Sparkey's mother; most of the children, as they came from the shops, were eating something, an ice or a lollipop; Sparkey looked at them and his mouth watered.



The third house down from where Sparkey sat was the Priest's House, and next to it was where the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Sion had been bombed. Now the church was only a hut standing in a rubble of broken masonry; there was a notice board outside it, lettered in big letters, HELP TO BUILD OUR CHURCH AND SCHOOLS; above the letters was a wooden airplane rising slowly up the scale — £2000, £3000, £4000; the airplane had stuck at that for a long time. "They need fifteen thousand pounds," said Sparkey's mother. "They'll never get that."

On Saturday morning there was no school, and now the Street was full of children playing; there were boys playing mysterious

games with balls, or chalking on the pavement, and smaller boys with cowboy hats and metal pistols; they lurked round corners and shouted at one another. "Go and play with them," said Sparkey's mother again, but Sparkey was not interested in small boys; though he was only five, going on six, he was ambitious; he was waiting for Tip Malone.

Just as one day the grown-up Sparkey was to know the face of his girl, his beloved, so now he knew Tip's face, his clothes, his voice, his doings and his gang.

Not long before, one of the Catford Street boys had been caught by the police; he had slashed an old lady with a knife. "F'r her handbag," Sparkey had said with relish. "He got sent away. That was Maxey Ford. He was in Tip Malone's gang."

"I don't believe it. Tip's a nicely brought-up boy," said Sparkey's mother.

"He isn't," said Sparkey indignantly.

Tip's gang was not big but it was choice. Jim Howes, Tony Zassi, Rory Isbister, Puggy, Ginger, and John Rowe. Tip was the biggest — "Well, he's thirteen," said Sparkey to his mother with awe. "He's got a bowie knife. He told Puggy Carpenter and Puggy told me." Sparkey's mother sniffed. "He's going to have a nail gun and he's got a bike with a dual brake control." Sparkey had faithfully learned all those difficult words. "He's going into the Navy, he'll be a sailor," said Sparkey as if he saw visions.

No one knew how many Malones there were. "There can't be more than nine," Angela often said, but they were so big and loud-voiced that the Street seemed full of them. They were all as alike as peas, all well set-up and astonishingly handsome, with clear skins and thick brown curly hair. "The stock must be good," Olivia was to say when she came to know them. They had the traditional blue eyes put in with smutty fingers — "Irish eyes," said Olivia.

"Irish blarney," said Angela. Angela, as usual, was right.

"It's not blarney exactly. It's what they hope and believe is going to happen; it's a kind of faith," said Olivia.

Olivia was right, too; there was something in the Malones that not even their poverty and untidiness and shabbiness could hide.

Mr. Malone, who drove a coal wagon, was a big, bragging, blue-

eyed man, but the one behind the whole family was Mrs. Malone; she looked, fittingly, like the pod they came from; she was big and bulging and flabby. Mrs. Malone was firmly behind her children: when they got into trouble, and they had plenty of trouble; when they had accidents, and they were always being run over, or falling onto their heads out of windows, or being taken to hospital in ambulances and returning in bandages or plaster. She was with them in their triumphs, and with them in their enterprises, and she was with them, very often and personally, in their fights.

There was something in Tip that warmed the cockles of a little boy's heart; Sparkey could not put it into words but, "He once pulled a face at me," said Sparkey.

"Why don't you pull one back?" said his mother, which showed how ignorant she was.

"I couldn't do that," said Sparkey, appalled. "But," he said reverently, "Tip knows me. P'rhaps one day I'll be in the gang."

"You can't be in a gang," said Sparkey's mother, "and that's that." Sparkey shut his lips, and his eyes looked a long way beyond her. When he was six his mother would not know what he did.

There was no Tip this Saturday morning. Sparkey's mother would soon take him away for dinner, leaving her papers to sell themselves. It was disappointing; there was nothing to do but look hard at the parcels belonging to the children who came back from the shops.

Perhaps that was why Sparkey did not see the packet fall; suddenly it was there on the pavement among the passing feet, a small cream-colored packet, sealed like an envelope and splashed with brilliant blue.

Sparkey did not know what it was, but in a flash he had unpeeled the *Evening News*, darted down the steps, dodged among the people and snatched it up. The blue splashes were pictures of flowers; Sparkey was only a little boy, and they caught his attention; instead of scurrying to the steps with what he had found, he stayed unwisely in the open street to look. A hand came over his and twitched the packet away.

Sparkey clutched at the corner as it went, yelping to his mother, but she was busy with a customer; another hand joined the first,

and small iron fingers began to prize his away. "Leggo, or I'll pinch you," said a voice.

Anyone could have told Sparkey he had no chance; the face that looked down into his was a pale, small mask with pale, set lips; it had an obstinate nose and eyes that seemed to be sealed with their dropped lids; this little girl's face might have been carved in stone; when she swore at Sparkey and opened her eyes they were as gray and cold as pebbles. Her hair, which was very fine and mouse-colored, was cut in bangs and fell to her shoulders; when she bent her head it parted on the nape of her neck. Father Lambert saw that as he came out of the Priest's House; it was the only part of her that looked vulnerable, that small white exposed neck.

Sparkey knew her. She was Lovejoy, Lovejoy Mason from the restaurant. Now they began to threaten each other in the shorthand speech the Street children used. "Gimme," said Lovejoy.

"Smine," shrieked Sparkey.

He had steel tips on his little shoes and he kicked at Lovejoy's shins. "You little varmint," called Father Lambert, while Sparkey's mother shouted, "You! Lovejoy! You leave Sparkey alone."

"Fancy a big girl fighting such a little boy!" said a passing woman; but Lovejoy was not fighting, she was, simply, taking. Before Father Lambert or Sparkey's mother could reach them Lovejoy gave Sparkey a blow in his small stomach that doubled him up, ripped the packet out of his hand and ran.

LOVEJOY pelted down toward the river, then turned and dodged up Garden Row — which had no Gardens — and on past the iron gates of the canal dock until she found herself in just such another street as Catford Street, wide and shabby with drab, porticoed houses; she was out of breath but safe.

Older and more wary than Sparkey, she went into one of the porticoes, where no one could come up behind her and snatch as she had snatched. She had no idea what she had taken; she was simply a little marauder.

It would have surprised Lovejoy's mother, Mrs. Mason, to be told that Lovejoy never had any pocket money; Mrs. Mason was always going to give her some but, somehow, it was always spent.

She paid Mrs. Combie, the restaurant woman, to lodge Lovejoy and provide her with the necessities of life, but she did not pay enough to provide anything else.

Lovejoy did not steal big things, nor money; she knew that to take money was wicked; but she was adept at taking a parcel out of a perambulator while she pretended to rock it, at walking along by a shop counter, gazing innocently at the clerk, and coming out with some sweets or a bundle of ribbon in her hand.

Now she looked at the packet, and her look changed to disgust. "Flowers. Seeds," she said and she almost threw it down the grating. Then she saw there was printing on it and she began to read.

Lovejoy, because she had changed schools so often, could hardly read. When she and her mother had first begun to come to Catford Street between their bookings, Lovejoy had appeared and disappeared so often in school that the teacher asked her, "Are you a canal child?" Canal children sometimes came to school if their fathers' barges had to go into the dock for repairs. Lovejoy had said nothing but she had been mortally offended.

"You think too much about how people look and much too much about clothes," Mrs. Combie often told her. Lovejoy did more than think about them; she had been trained in them as in a religion. "One must look smart" — that was her mother's creed, and Lovejoy was her mother's disciple. She had been, at first, the best-dressed child in Catford Street — "On top," Mrs. Combie said later. "Her vests and pants were in tatters from the beginning." But underclothes did not show, and Lovejoy never wasted a thought on them. Her clothes were her stock in trade, and she took great care of them. When she came in from school, she would slip into her old pinafore dress and a plaid coat that she had worn so long that it was like her skin, and carefully put her good clothes away, sponging off marks and pressing the pleats; she washed her own white socks and gloves, and she carefully hoarded the soap flakes and the pot of shoe cream for her red shoes that Mrs. Combie gave her. "She's not a child, she's an old woman," said Mrs. Combie's sister, Cassie. Cassie was a slattern, and Lovejoy's fastidiousness enraged her. "I suppose you think you're pretty?" she said once.

"No," said Lovejoy certainly. She had studied herself too often

in the mirror to have any doubts about that; she had a certain fineness and lightness, dear little bones, thought Lovejoy, but she was not pretty; all the same, she did not like Cassie any the better for saying it and she adopted a way of looking Cassie up and down, taking in the trodden-down heels of Cassie's shoes, the ladders in her stockings; her eyes went over Cassie's hair, golden but unwashed and bundled in a net.

"What are you looking at?" Cassie would demand.

"Nothing," Lovejoy would say and would hum a little tune.

Lately clothes had been very difficult. "Too tight for you under the arms, isn't it?" asked Cassie spitefully, looking at the little gray suit.

"It isn't," said Lovejoy, but it was; and the scarlet shoes were too small now, as were her school shoes; they hurt and raised blisters. She had had to tell Mrs. Combie about the school shoes, and Mrs. Combie bought her a pair of sneakers. "*Sneakers*," said Lovejoy in shame, and she set her teeth and wore the red shoes if ever she went out of the Street.

LIKE ALL the children, Lovejoy Mason was often subjected to the inquisition of the Street, pecking questions from sharp little beaks.

"Where d'ya live?"

"Two hundred and three Catford Street."

"That's the rest'raunt. No one lives there."

"Mrs. Combie does," said Lovejoy.

"Is Mrs. Combie your mum?"

"No, she's *not*," said Lovejoy indignantly.

"Where is your mum?"

"She's away."

And then someone would cry, "Don't believe you've got a mum."

"What and who is this Mrs. Mason, if I may ask?" Cassie had said in her loud aggressive voice when Lovejoy was left behind.

"She's a coloratura," said Mrs. Combie in the elegant, even tones which showed she did not know in the least what she meant. "A coloratura," said Mrs. Combie firmly. "Her stage name is Bertha Serita. She's in the Blue Moons. You often see their picture

in the paper. Look." And she went to the dresser and took out a cutting from a Bournemouth paper.

"They're a concert party really, high class," she continued. "They wear midnight-blue dresses, real silk net with silver ruffs. It looks lovely with her chestnut hair," said Mrs. Combie.

"Her hair's dyed," said Cassie.

"I know, but she's a beautiful woman," said Mrs. Combie, "though she is getting plump."

"Fat," said Cassie.

"Plump," said Mrs. Combie, "and she has a beautiful skin and coloring."

"Out of a box," said Cassie spitefully.

"But why doesn't your mother take you?" Tip was to ask Lovejoy when he knew her better. "She used to take you, didn't she?"

"That was when I was sweet," said Lovejoy. She told that to Vincent too. Vincent was Mrs. Combie's husband but he was never called Mr. Combie — always Vincent.

"I used to do a kitten dance on the stage," Lovejoy told Tip and Vincent. "I had a swan's-down dress and little swan's-down gloves. And I used to do a song with my mother. In it she was dead but she came back at night to see her child. I was the child," said Lovejoy. "I used to wear a white nightgown and say my prayers to her."

"Ugh!" said Vincent.

"It wasn't ugh," said Lovejoy. "People used to cry."

"But why did you stop?" asked Tip. "Why didn't you go on dancing?"

"My little teeth fell out," said Lovejoy.

To Tip, to all the children in Catford Street, the coming out of a first tooth was something to be proud of. "I got sixpence," said Tip, "and threepence for each one after." For most it was proud, but for Lovejoy it had been a tragedy.

"Did you say she could leave that child here?" Cassie asked.

"She has to be left somewhere," said Mrs. Combie helplessly.

Lovejoy had come willy-nilly to accept that. It could have been much worse; Mrs. Combie was kind, Vincent was very kind, but

for Mrs. Combie there was really only Vincent and for Vincent there was only the restaurant. Lovejoy was a little extra tacked on.

All she had of her mother, most of the time, was a pack of post cards she carried in the pocket of her coat. When her mother did come home — Catford Street had become home now — Lovejoy was kept away from school. She was too useful to be spared; she washed and ironed her mother's clothes and brushed her mother's hair; she played the gramophone, fetched in beer. Though Lovejoy's legs were strong they ached by the end of the day. "How do you expect to get on?" her teacher, Miss Cobb, would say when Lovejoy appeared in school again. Lovejoy, sadly, did not expect to.

SHE TOOK a long time, now, standing in the portico, to spell out the words on the packet she had snatched from Sparkey. *Cornflower* (*Cyanus minor*) — she could not make anything of that — *double blue*. Double blue what? *Hardy annual, two and a half feet*. What's an annual? *Very showy for borders. In bloom from June to September. Sow in March or April* — that's now, thought Lovejoy — *in any good garden soil, raked fine*.

When she had managed to read through that, Lovejoy slit the packet open; she was careful not to break into the blue painted flowers — cornflowers, as she knew now. Inside was a small, very small, white envelope. Blooming cheats, thought Lovejoy, to put a little one into such a big one. She broke a corner of the envelope and shook the seeds out into her hand.

Lovejoy tried to crack one with her teeth, but it was unexpectedly hard. The seed is the dark part, she thought. Now that she was not out of breath from running, she felt comfortable and interested. She looked at the seed again. "Pooh, it isn't as big as a pin," she said — she meant the head of a pin. How could it grow into a flower, a double blue flower, two and a half feet high? "I don't believe it," said Lovejoy.

She nearly threw the packet away; but after a moment she put the seeds back into the envelope, put it in the packet, and tucked that into her pocket. Then, because she, like all the children, found it easier to jump and skip and hop than to walk, she began to skip home.



IF ANYONE observant had been walking or driving down Catford Street to the river, he might have seen a little restaurant; it did not strike the eye but, once seen, it was remarkable. At the river end of the Street the houses were built of small dark bricks; most of them had ugly shops built out to the pavement, but the house with the restaurant, flat-fronted and pleasing, opened onto a small forecourt paved with cobbles.

Under the windows, standing on the cobbles, were two pyramid bay trees, their dark leaves fresh and clean. "Vincent washes them," said Mrs. Combie.

"Washes them?" Cassie had never heard of trees being washed.

The little clipped trees were astonishingly pretty; their color stood out in the Street; the bands on their oak tubs were freshly painted. Between the windows was a plate-glass door with a polished brass handle; at night an apricot light shone through onto the pavement. On the brown oak panel across the house front, in dim gold letters, was written VINCENT'S. To anyone with accustomed eyes it looked like a restaurant that might have been in Dover Street or St. James's, but very few people who came down Catford Street had eyes like that.

Once the restaurant had belonged to Mrs. Combie's father and had served ordinary English meals. "English cooking is uneatable," said Vincent. Mrs. Combie knew that was not true but there was certainly something magical in Vincent's.

"He takes a duck," she told Cassie, "and puts it in a nearthen-ware casserole. He puts the duck in whole, with butter —"

"Butter. For *cooking*?" said Cassie.

"He only half cooks the duck, it must be still red; in another pan he fries some button mushrooms —"

"With more butter, I suppose?" said Cassie sarcastically.

"More butter," said Mrs. Combie and sighed as she thought of the price. "Mushrooms and little onions and bacon cut into bits," she went on, "and herbs and seasoning; he lets them get nice and brown, then separately he makes a good brown sauce and puts in a glass of sherry."

"Sherry! Wine! What a wicked waste," said Cassie, impressed in spite of herself.

"Then he cuts up the duck and puts it back in the casserole with the mushrooms and onions and bacon and pours the sauce over it all and shuts it up tightly and puts it in the oven."

"That's a nice expensive way of cooking," said Cassie. "Who does he think's going to pay to eat that?"

"People do," said Mrs. Combie.

"Not in Catford Street," said Cassie.

That was what nagged Mrs. Combie. "I should have let him have his way and open somewhere in the West End," she said. "But how could I? Even if we sold up here we shouldn't have had enough."

The restaurant did not prosper; a few people drifted in from the Square, but no one who, as Vincent said, really paid for a meal. "I told you. I should have started up West," said Vincent restlessly.

There was one regular client, a Mr. Manley, who came every Wednesday night and for lunch on Sundays. Mrs. Combie guessed that was when his housekeeper had her days off.

He was a thick, small man and his manners were strangely gross; he made loud noises when he ate, and spattered the tablecloth; his clothes were not spattered only because he tucked his napkin into his collar. "Why does he come?" asked Vincent irritably.

"I think he likes your cooking," said Mrs. Combie.

"Probably never has a decent meal at home," said Vincent.

"I think he lives in those big new flats along the river."

"All sorts of people live in them," said Vincent loftily.

Vincent was fastidious; he did not like serving Mr. Manley, but Mr. Manley certainly knew what food should be and spent more money than anyone else on the ungrateful Vincent. He always had a plain dinner: a *chateaubriand* or *escalope de veau*, a salad, properly dressed, cheese, Stilton or Camembert, and a bottle of wine.

He never praised Vincent, merely nodded if things were right. Vincent resented that. "Real people, of course, don't flatter," he told Lovejoy, but Mr. Manley hardly came into that category. For Vincent there were two races of humans, people and real people, "People who are Somebodies," he told Lovejoy reverently.

Vincent was a fine pale man with a little mustache that looked like down, like two brown moths, thought Lovejoy. Everything he did was quick and neat. He had gray eyes that could blaze with excitement; their pupils could grow small and dark if he was angry, which was often; they were, if Mrs. Combie had only known it, a fanatic's eyes.

Lovejoy liked to be with Vincent. She used to watch him write the menus with a fine pen and mauve ink; he made such flourishes that hardly anyone could read what he had written. That disturbed Mrs. Combie.

"Shouldn't we put a card in the window to say what there is to eat and what it costs?" she asked.

"God forbid!" said Vincent.

Vincent liked to write an Italian menu. "*Risotto di Frutti di Mare,*" wrote Vincent. "*Costa di Manza al Vino Rosso.*"

"Well really!" said Cassie the first time she saw one of these menus. "Really!"

"It isn't real," Mrs. Combie said hastily. "He only writes it."

"That's silly," said Cassie, but it was not silly. It was like a pianist exercising his fingers on a silent keyboard.

Everything he served was good, even the ordinary dishes, the omelets and steaks he cooked for the few customers he had; he dealt at the best and most expensive shops in Mortimer Street — Nichols the butcher's, Fenwick and Lay the poulters' and Driscoll the greengrocer's.

"But there's good stuff on the barrows," said Mrs. Combie.

"Stuff's the right word for it," said Vincent.

He did not buy much, but every day he bought afresh, not only vegetables but meat or fish or poultry, and eggs and cream. "One day maybe we'll have our own farm," he told Mrs. Combie.

"Our own farm?" asked Mrs. Combie faintly. When she was frightened her voice seemed to reel away, and her breast palpitated.

"Why not?" said Vincent. "You don't know, Ettie," he would say, putting his arm round her shoulders, "you don't know the money there is in this; and not only money," he said, his voice reverent. "Men like Lombard at Romanos, and Vera, were famous all over the world. One day you may be proud, Ettie, of being married to Vincent."

"He only married you to get the restaurant," Cassie told Mrs. Combie. "And because you're soft."

"Yes, I married her because she's soft," said Vincent, and his eyes looked like an angry little dog's. "She has a soft voice, which you haven't. She feels soft." And he put his arm round Mrs. Combie and squeezed her; over Mrs. Combie's sallow, thin cheeks came her deep, pleased flush.

No one knew when Mrs. Mason would appear in Catford Street; a post card or a telegram would come, and next day she would arrive. It might be at any time, but in March or early April she always came. "She comes to see *me*," said Lovejoy, "before she goes where we're booked for Easter." Lovejoy still said "we." "It might be any day now."

Mrs. Combie spring-cleaned the house, and Lovejoy helped her; last of all they turned out the Masons' room, the first floor back. The walls were swept down, the linoleum scrubbed, the gas fireplace blacked, the heavy curtains beaten, the armchair beaten too. On the armchair was a stain from some lingering scent Mrs. Mason had spilled, and if Lovejoy was more than usually lonely she pressed her nose against it and sniffed. When everything in the room was clean, a fresh starched tablecloth was put on the table, a clean white honeycomb counterpane on the bed and a white crocheted runner on the dressing table, and it was ready.

Lovejoy's wardrobe was spring-cleaned too, at least as far as she was able; she let down the hem of her plaid coat, though it took her a long time; the hem looked a different color from the other plaid but at least it was respectable; she cleaned the sneakers with whitening, though she could guess what her mother would say when she saw them. "Never mind; she'll buy me some shoes," she said. She asked Mrs. Combie to wash her hair and brushed it

for an extra five minutes every day. "Anyone would think the queen was coming," mocked Cassie. Then one afternoon Lovejoy came in from school and found a letter on the mat.

Before she picked it up she knew it was to say her mother was not coming. "She *never* writes, not a letter," said Lovejoy. Slowly she carried it to Mrs. Combie in the kitchen.

"She says they don't finish till the tenth and then go to Clifton for Easter," said Mrs. Combie, troubled. She appealed across the tea table to Vincent. "She says the time's too short for the fare. Well, Scarborough *is* a long way."

"If I had a little girl," said Vincent, "I'd come from John o' Groat's to see her."

Lovejoy had retreated to the side passage, in the shadow of the stairs. When she heard what Vincent said she leaned her head against the banister knob and shut her eyes; she shut them tightly, but two small fierce tears came spurting out.

IN THE YEARS since the Masons had come to Catford Street, Vincent had come to like and respect Lovejoy. At first all that he had known of her was that Ettie's new and abundant-looking lodger had a little girl of whom he caught occasional glimpses. Then one afternoon he found Lovejoy sitting on the stairs. He had opened the door from the restaurant quietly and come lightly up the first flight of the stairs and along the landing to the second flight; there he almost stepped on Lovejoy. "Hello," he said.

She lifted her head and said, "Hello."

"What are you doing here?"

"Waiting."

"Is your mother out?"

"No, she's in." And she went back to her waiting in a way that prohibited further talk. Vincent went on upstairs.

He saw her there once again — on guard? thought Vincent. He knew there was a man in the room and he knew that Lovejoy knew he had guessed it. "Who are these gentlemen who come and take your mother out?" he heard Cassie ask her.

"Gentlemen," said Lovejoy and walked away.

"I believe they go into her room," said Cassie.

"That they don't do." Mrs. Combie flared up.

"You don't know," said Cassie, "and, Ettie, I think you don't want to know."

Now, WHEN Vincent had gone into the restaurant, Lovejoy came and stood by Mrs. Combie. "I should only be half fare," she said. "Couldn't I go to Scarborough and see her?"

"Dearie, she's staying with a friend," said Mrs. Combie.

"Friend in trousers," said Cassie.

Lovejoy turned away to the sink, where they had been peeling potatoes for dinner. She picked up the potato knife and threw it at Cassie.

"I couldn't blame the child," Mrs. Combie told Vincent later. "Cassie shouldn't have said that." But, at the time, she did blame Lovejoy sharply and sent her to bed.

Lovejoy lay in the double bed, trying not to look at the immaculate room, its starched covers, the vase ready for the leftover flowers from the restaurant tables; Vincent had promised them to her. She had had no tea and she was cold and presently she crept out of bed and fetched her coat and huddled it round her. Then her fingers met something stiff in the pocket; it was the packet of cornflowers.

"WHAT DOES corn look like?" Lovejoy asked Vincent. "It says it has blue flowers."

"Corn hasn't any flowers," said Vincent.

"There are blue flowers on the packet, *printed*," she said to herself, and the obstinate, closed look came on her face. "I shall plant them and find out."

But before even one seed can be planted there has to be earth. And in Catford Street there was not a sign of earth, except in the bombed places; everything was man-made.

When Lovejoy thought about the cornflowers, the seeds, she seemed to forget a little, a very little, about her mother. "I need to plant them," she said to herself, but where?

"Plant them in a box," said Mrs. Combie absently when Lovejoy asked her.

"I want a garden," said Lovejoy. If she had wanted the moon it would have been as easy to get in Catford Street.

"Mr. Vincent," she said, "what is good garden earth?"

Strangely enough, Vincent could not answer this simple question.

There were, of course, back gardens to some of the Street houses; but they were dark spaces of dankness between sooty walls; hand-carts and bicycles and mangles were kept in them, washing was hung in them and they were full of bottles and tins.

It was queer to think of people in Catford Street owning gardens. Lovejoy had lived there all these years but she had not seen what she saw now, the flowers — but they must always have been there, she thought. Now, in almost every window, she saw pots with plants growing in them; pots of red and pink flowers, of yellow ones, daffodils — she knew them — and hyacinths, as well as green things, ferns, palms, rubber plants; Sparkey's mother grew fuchsias in her flat window. Mrs. Cleary and Miss Arnot were unpopular, their cats spoiled the window boxes.

A man in a nearby areaway had plants in half-barrels. It was a barrel garden; it even had barrels cut into seats. Lovejoy knew the man; he was Mr. Isbister, Rory Isbister's grandfather, a wrinkled, brown old man, who lived in the basement of Number Twenty-Three. "What are those?" asked Lovejoy, peering down from the pavement one day.

"Sweet peas," said Mr. Isbister.

He let Lovejoy talk to him. "I've got some seeds," she said.

"You'd better get busy," said Mr. Isbister, "'s nearly April."

"Is April the time to sow?"

"March, April, for most things."

"Why?" asked Lovejoy.

Mr. Isbister talked in few words and long pauses. "Christmas-time," said Mr. Isbister, "till round 'bout Febr'ary —" Pause.

"Yes," said Lovejoy encouragingly.

"Th' earth's like dead," said Mr. Isbister; another pause. "Round 'bout March" — pause — "begins t' work. April's working." Mr. Isbister looked up at the sky and frowned. "April's short month," he said, "must get after things" — pause. "Get busy," and he went back to his sweet peas.

But Lovejoy had not finished. "If you wanted to make a garden here, where would you do it?" she asked.

There was a silence, then, "Nowhere," said Mr. Isbister.

Lovejoy set her lips.

"When you do anything," Vincent had told her often, "people will advise you not to, they'll want to drag you down. Don't let them. *They — must — not.*" Then, thinking of Cassie, "I am going to have a restaurant that I call a restaurant, or I'll have nothing at all."

"I'll have a garden or nothing at all," said Lovejoy.

EVERY now and then, in the streets between the Square and the river, there was a bombed-out gap. Where once houses or shops had been there would be a pit, sometimes a hundred or two hundred yards across.

After the war the debris of the bombed buildings had been removed, leaving only rubble that would do for making new foundations someday. The workmen had left each pit tidy, but soon they were all untidy again; people tipped rubbish in them and threw tins and scrap iron down in them. They were seemingly empty, but Lovejoy knew, as every child in Catford Street knew, that the bomb ruins were the headquarters of the gangs.

Every boy in Catford Street who was big enough belonged to a gang. By tacit consent, the girls kept out of the ruins; if a girl went in them, she was not behaving like a girl and she could be fought.

"It's y'own fault, y'asked for it," the boys used to say if they had to fight the girls. "Come in here and we'll knock y'teeth out," they said now to Lovejoy.

For Lovejoy was hovering. With the packet in her pocket, she had been walking round and round the bomb ruins; some, bare and wide, she knew were no good; they were as public as the streets, everyone could look in them; but there were some where the rubble made hiding places, in which, picking a way in and out, she could get where no one could see her — places disused, derelict, given up, quite empty. "If it wasn't for those blasted boys . . ." said Lovejoy.



CHAPTER 4

Just as a bird, after flying and fluttering and perching and looking, will suddenly build its nest in some exposed place so bare and noticeable that it seems that a cat must get at it or boys steal the eggs and tear it down, so Lovejoy, after days of searching for secret spots, suddenly chose an extraordinary place to plant her seeds.

There was one bomb ruin where, as far as she knew, the boys had made no camps — they called anything they built in a bomb ruin a camp. This site was too close to the top of Catford Street, too public, but left on it were a few remnants of brick walls that must once have been cellar walls; among them, where two made an angle, she found a place.

It was sheltered, the walls made it feel secret; if she stooped or knelt on the ground no one could see her, and in it was a patch of earth that showed among the rubble. It'll do, thought Lovejoy. She cleared the patch until it was big enough, about four feet square; she kept the best bits of rubble to edge the garden, as she had edged the seaside gardens she had made on the sand in Bournemouth or Margate in the halcyon days when she was sweet.

It took a whole week to clear the rubble and make the edges; the middle was hard black earth with a few blades of grass and weeds in it. I must dig it, thought Lovejoy, but with what?

She asked Mr. Isbister. She appeared suddenly in front of him as a robin appears on the handle of a spade. "What do you dig the earth up with?" she asked.

He showed her a small stout garden fork and a trowel. "Real garden needs spade," he said, "but you could manage with these."

Lovejoy looked at the tools. "You wouldn't lend me them?" she asked.

"No," said Mr. Isbister and put them away.



A fork. A trowel, a fork. How can I get a fork? Wondering, Lovejoy rounded the corner and came to the Square Gardens, and there Lucas — though she did not know his name was Lucas — had left his wheelbarrow on the path while he had gone to have a smoke. Lovejoy's quick eyes saw a twig broom and a spade and a big fork in the barrow. Who knows? thought Lovejoy, he might have left a little fork as well. She pressed her nose against the chestnut palings of the fence.

The Gardens looked an oasis of green and deep-down freshness after the Street; they smelled fresh, of grass and leaves and newly turned earth; a few daffodils were out along the paths, and hundreds of crocuses in the grass. "You *have* been successful!" the residents said to Angela. "The Gardens have never looked better." Lovejoy forgot the fork as, holding two of the palings, she pressed her face in between them to look.

"What are you doing here?"

Angela had a new spring hat; it was blue, trimmed with blue feather wings, which gave her a look of extraordinary swiftness. When she pounced on Lovejoy she might have been an avenging angel.

"What are you doing here?"

Lovejoy, her back against the paling, stood mute.

"Answer me," said Angela. "What are you doing?"

"Lookin'." Lovejoy let the word out and shut her lips.

Here was one of the Catford Street children doing what Angela had always hoped they would do: appreciate the Gardens. If Lovejoy had asked her question, "Is that good garden earth?" or been able to say what she felt about the crocuses, the whole history would have been different, but she was silent and sullen and dropped her eyelids in concealment.

"You were going to climb the palings," said Angela.

Lovejoy was suddenly filled with a terrible feeling of the power of grownups, the power and the knowledge. No one knew better than she how to behave, pretty manners had been drilled into her when she was a very little girl, but now her helplessness enraged her; she had thrown the potato knife at Cassie, and what she did now imprinted her forever on Angela's mind. She spat. The spit landed hard on the pavement by Angela's shoe. Both of them looked a little frightened at that dark spot of venom on the pavement. Then, skipping as if nothing had happened, skip-hop-jump, Lovejoy turned her back and disappeared toward the Street, while Angela, with a heightened color, went home.

AFTER THAT Lovejoy gave up trying to get a fork for nothing. I'll go to Dwight's, she thought.

Sooner or later everybody in the Street bought or sold something at DWIGHT'S REPOSITORY AND SALE ROOMS, *Established 1889*. Crammed in the window and inside the shop, from the floor to the ceiling, was junk: furniture and clothes and china, toys and bits of bicycles, bird cages and nearly new washing machines, shoes and books and radios; things were thick along the pavement and nobody knew how Mr. Dwight managed to get them back into the shop at night.

As Lovejoy came up, he was there as he always was, putting out more things. Lovejoy waited until he looked up, then said, "Mrs. Combie sent me to ask, have you a garden fork and a trowel?"

"Is *she* starting window boxes?" asked Mr. Dwight.

He went back into the shop and began turning things over. Lovejoy followed and watched. "I did have one, somewhere," he said, and lifted a folded tablecloth, some old tennis balls in a net, and at last, from under a long-clothes baby doll, he brought out a small dusty fork. "There's a trowel to it somewhere," said Mr. Dwight. "I'll look for it. Tell Mrs. Combie I'll let her have it this evening."

"How — much?" asked Lovejoy.

Mr. Dwight looked earnestly at the fork. "It's a nice little fork," he said slowly. "It's handy."

"It's dirty," said Lovejoy.

"It's strong," said Mr. Dwight.

"One prong is bent," said Lovejoy.

"Well, she can have it for one-and-six," said Mr. Dwight. "The same for the trowel. Take it or leave it."

"You wouldn't hire it?" she said.

"No, I wouldn't," said Mr. Dwight. "Two-and-six for the two."

"Do *you* know what that child has been doing this morning?" asked Cassie, outraged. "Singing in the Square."

It was lunchtime; Mrs. Combie, who was in the kitchen serving vegetables — there were three people in the restaurant — leaned her weight on the table, as she did when she was tired. She looked at Lovejoy across the potatoes. Lovejoy defiantly looked back.

"Like her mother!" said Cassie.



"Don't be silly, Cassie. Mrs. Mason is a concert artist," said Mrs. Combie, and Lovejoy could have kissed her.

"Singing. Begging!" said Cassie.

"Did you, Lovejoy?" asked Mrs. Combie. Her voice sounded damped and sad and Lovejoy hung her head.

"It wasn't any use," she said.

Standing on the edge of the pavement, she had sung some of her mother's songs. One lady had opened a window and thrown her threepence — a queer dark lady who stayed at the window to listen. "I couldn't help myself," said Olivia when Angela said she had encouraged the children to beg. "It sounded such a cheep in the Square." A maid came out from another house and told Lovejoy to go away, and a lady came from the Gardens and said the noise was waking her baby, and then Cassie appeared and dragged her back to the restaurant. "I need two-and-threepence," said Lovejoy hopelessly. "I've got threepence from the lady. Could — could I write to my mother? If you would lend me a stamp?"

Mrs. Combie looked more tired and said, "Dearie, I don't know her address."

"You don't *know* —" began Cassie.

"She'll write presently," said Mrs. Combie with dignity and put some buttered carrots in a dish and carried them to Vincent.

"If you ask me you'll be stuck, Ettie," said Cassie when she came back.

"Mrs. Combie," asked Lovejoy when Cassie had gone, "couldn't you lend me the money and put it on the bill?"

"I daren't," said Mrs. Combie. "You see, your mother hasn't paid, not for two months."

Lovejoy went back to the bomb ruin, slipped down the bank, bent and ran, doubling in and out of the broken walls, to the garden. She crouched in the middle of it, trying to dig a hole with her finger, but the earth was too hard; all she did was to stub her finger so that it sent pain up her arm. Then she sat, nursing the throbbing, swelling finger in her armpit, her head on her knees.

THE PLACES where money was kept were these: telephone boxes, the pennies put down for the newspapers while Sparkey's mother

was at dinner or tea — but no one touched those trusting pennies — gas meters, and the boxes on the doors in Ladies' Rooms. Lovejoy had inspected most of these; but collected nothing at all.

There was one more place she knew where money was kept: in churches.

Like every other child in Catford Street, Lovejoy had looked into Our Lady of Sion. The Catholic church was makeshift and gimcrack; the statues were of the cheapest plaster and the Stations of the Cross that hung along the walls were colored prints in cheap wood frames; the altar cloth was plain linen, the screen behind, plain blue — the feminine hands that helped Father Lambert were too rough for silk and gold thread. And yet there was money in the boxes, thought Lovejoy. There were four boxes at the entrance, and that was not all; inside the church there was a box called "Sisters of Nazareth" and a box for candle money. There were always candles burning on the small candle rails, and, though anyone could take a candle and light it without paying because nobody watched here, people always put in their twopences. Probably the boxes were full of money, thought Lovejoy longingly.

It was not easy to steal in the Catholic church because it was never empty. From Lovejoy's point of view this disadvantage was balanced by the fact that no one took any notice of anyone else; anyone could pray at the candle rail for an hour and no one would think it queer. You can do just as you like, thought Lovejoy, but you have to bend your knee as you come in and go out. Well, I can do that, said Lovejoy.

She prospected and pondered for two days. Then, after she had helped Mrs. Combie wash up at noon, she quietly stayed away from school and went to the church. She had thought it might be empty after lunch when the shop and factory workers had gone back to work and the children were at school. Lovejoy went stealthily in; she had Vincent's screwdriver in her pocket, and she felt like a burglar.

But the church was not empty. A girl with a scarf over her head was kneeling before the altar of the little makeshift side chapel. Lovejoy tiptoed across the church and knelt down in the chapel too. The girl had a string of beads in her hands and as she prayed

she played with it. A necklace in church! thought Lovejoy primly. Even she knew better than that.

It was quiet here, almost secret. The small altar had a blue screen behind it, a vase of paper roses, and over it, on a pedestal, a plaster Mother and Child. Below the statue was a candle rail and a candlebox. Lovejoy looked through her fingers at the candlebox and then at the girl, willing her to go away. In a moment the sliding beads grew still, the girl put the necklace in her pocket, stood up and went to the candlestand. She took a new candle out of the holder, lit it from another candle, looked up at the statue and, letting the wax run down to make a warm bed in the socket, fixed the candle upright on the rail. Then she took out a purse, found two pennies and put them in the candlebox; Lovejoy heard them clink as they fell. As the girl moved aside to kneel again before she went, Lovejoy saw that the padlock on the box was open.

For a moment she could not believe her luck; she had to rub her eyes and look again. There was no doubt about it, the small strong padlock dangled from the hasp undone; the girl walked away down the church, and Lovejoy was alone with the open box.

"I must have left it open," Father Lambert was to say afterward. "Now I wonder how the devil I came to do that." He had thought for a moment and said, "Perhaps it wasn't the devil."

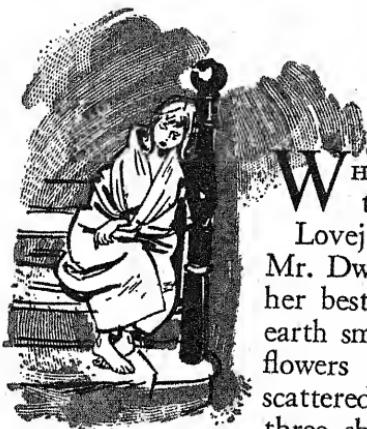
Whatever it was, Lovejoy got up carefully now and went to stand by the candlebox. The whole church seemed hushed, waiting. Do it. Do it, said Lovejoy and the church seemed to say it too; the open box was like an invitation, like — a little too like — the newspaper pennies. She hesitated, but then delicately, with her finger, she slid the padlock off, lifted the hasp and opened the box; there was not much money inside but she put in her quick little claw and scooped some of it out. It did not clink much. Experienced in hiding things, she did not put all the heavy copper pennies into her pockets but some into her thick woolen socks. I hope they don't come down, she thought. Three times she dipped, then pulled the socks up, shut the box, slid the padlock into place and locked it.

Lovejoy unmistakably clinked as she moved. I'd better go, fast's I can, she thought and had begun to move heavily away when the statue on its tall pedestal caught her eye.

To Lovejoy the statues in the Catholic church seemed beautiful, especially this one of Mary. "Her robe's a beautiful sky blue," she told Vincent afterward. Mary's pink hands and face were a little bright, perhaps, but she had pretty, shiny painted nut-brown hair and on the back of her head was the usual gold plate. Lovejoy did not know the purpose of that but she thought it decorative, like a dear little new kind of hat. The Baby had one too.

The eyes of the statue were looking down at her — down *into* me, thought Lovejoy uneasily; she had the feeling the statue was real and had seen what she had done, but was not angry; the eyes had been sad and gentle before, they still looked gentle and sad — not even cross, thought Lovejoy; that mysteriously offended her.

She began to panic. She had only to walk out, carefully, so that she did not clink, but instead she had a strong feeling that she could not walk out, that she should put the pennies back. Almost she did. She had been perfectly calm when she opened the box, but now her skin prickled, and her hands and her forehead were wet. Why doesn't she look *away*? thought Lovejoy. Turn your head, she wanted to say sharply, but of course the statue could not, it was only plaster. With a mighty effort Lovejoy walked down the side aisle. At the bottom she turned. The eyes were still looking.



CHAPTER 5

WHAT HAPPENS when a sin is committed? Usually the sinner flourishes.

Lovejoy bought the fork and trowel from Mr. Dwight and dug up the ground, doing her best, with the small fork, to make the earth smooth and fine. She sowed the corn-flowers at either end of the garden, and scattered earth over them. There had been three shillings eightpence in the candlebox and from the one-and-twopence she had over she bought grass seed, which she sowed in the center.

Now the garden was ready to grow. In the earth the seeds were changing into plants — “or presently they’ll change,” said Lovejoy when she dug one up with her finger and found it was still the same.

At night now, when she went to bed, she did not lie awake feeling the emptiness; she thought about the garden, the seeds, their promised colors. She had never before thought of colors, except in clothes; now she saw colors everywhere, the strong yellow of daffodils, the blue and clear pink — or hideous pink — of hyacinths, the deep colors of anemones. She was learning all their names; she saw how white flowers shone and showed their shape against the London drab and gray. She was filled with her own business. She had never had her own business before; directly after breakfast, on her way to school, she went to the garden and was thinking about it all day long.

Each day she discovered something new. In Woolworth’s she haunted the garden counter. It was piled high with packets of seeds and she needed seed; she had ambitions beyond cornflowers now. It was no use trying to swipe a whole packet but she found that, if she handled them as if she were turning them over, she could, by pinching sharply and quickly, make a little hole in the paper and sometimes a seed, or a few seeds, trickled out. The packets looked as though a mouse had nibbled them, or a bird had pecked them. It took time. Lovejoy did not dare to go often in case the salesgirls grew suspicious.

She kept the seeds in a pillbox and slept with them under her pillow. When she had a dozen she sowed them an inch apart. “Love-in-a-mist, mignonette, alyssum.” As if they were a charm she said them.

Sometimes, in her mind, Lovejoy was back in the church with the candles shining and the statue looking into her. And like a murderer going back to the scene of his crime, at last she went back to the church; she slipped in up the side aisle and stopped, quivering with shock. “Coo!” whispered Lovejoy. “Cool!” The hairs seemed to rise on the back of her neck and her legs felt cold. The statue was covered up.

Standing there, Lovejoy looked slowly round; all the statues were covered up; the altar candles, the vases of flowers were gone,

everything was swathed in purple, and the hooded figures were frightening. Lovejoy had never heard of Holy Week but she felt as if a cataclysm had happened, and a tumult of grief and fear lifted up in her. "Coo!" she said again. "Cripes!" — and turned and ran.

THE POST CARD came at breakfast time and was addressed to Mrs. Combie. *Expect me Thursday. Love to my baby. Bertha.*

The postmark was Harrogate. "That's where she has been," said Mrs. Combie. "Harrogate's a good-class place." She turned the post card over to look at the picture with admiration. "So much for Cassie," she said.

Her whole face looked smoothed as she poured herself out another cup of tea; her hand was steady and her eyes looked happy. Then she *was* afraid, thought Lovejoy.

She, Lovejoy, felt as if a thunderbolt had gone through her she was so surprised — surprised at herself, not at the post card. When Mrs. Combie had read it out, it felt like — an interruption, thought Lovejoy. I shan't be able to garden, she had thought at once, and into her mind had flashed the undeniable thought that when her mother was there she, Lovejoy, spent most of her time waiting — waiting, hushed as a mouse, for her mother to wake in the mornings; waiting in the shops while her mother tried on clothes; waiting outside dressing-room doors, outside restaurants; or waiting at home, sitting on the stairs. Why did people take it for granted that children had all that time to waste? I want to garden, not wait, she thought rebelliously.

It was only for a moment; as if a spell had lifted and come down again, a moment later she was shocked. Garden! when *Mother* . . . she thought and she began to quiver.

"When is she coming? When?"

"Thursday," said Vincent.

"This Thursday? That's tomorrow."

"Yes, Maundy Thursday," said Mrs. Combie.

"Coming at Easter," Lovejoy said, and she looked from Vincent to Mrs. Combie. "That's queer. We never could get away from the Blue Moons at Easter time."

MRS. MASON had been home for three weeks—"three years," said Cassie, and Lovejoy did not contradict her—when Vincent announced he was taking Lovejoy for a walk.

Now and again, on a Sunday, Vincent went for a walk; it was almost an expedition as far away as he could get in spirit from the Street; "I need—I need to breathe a different air," said Vincent. "Somewhere—elegant," he said, breathing through his nostrils as he did when he was offended. It was no use taking Mrs. Combie; loyal as she was, elegance was wasted on her; the perfect companion for these walks was Lovejoy. "She doesn't *know* anything," said Vincent, "but she has feeling," and together they visited St. James's or Berkeley Square or Bond Street and looked, not enviously but most fastidiously, into the windows of the little shops; Lovejoy would instruct Vincent about the clothes and he would instruct her about the furniture, the china and glass, and the pictures.

"It's not Sunday," she said now in surprise when Vincent asked her. Mrs. Combie was surprised too, but, "Come along," said Vincent firmly. He and Lovejoy went on a bus all the way to Hyde Park Corner and walked down Knightsbridge to Sloane Square; when they came back Mrs. Mason had gone.

"She had a telegram from the Blue Moons," said Mrs. Combie, "and she went at once."

"Where? Where are they?" Lovejoy asked.

"Brighton. She said it was a wonderful booking; they hadn't one for Easter, that's why she was so worried." Mrs. Combie's face looked easy and clear. "Tell you what," said Mrs. Combie, "you and me'll go down and see her one week-end. She gave me fifteen pounds. Now go and tidy the bedroom, dearie; I must help with the lunches." Neither of them had noticed that Vincent had gone into the kitchen without saying a word.

The bedroom needed tidying; it looked as if a whirlwind had been through it and had swept it almost bare; Lovejoy's clothes were thrown down in a corner of the cupboard, but her handkerchiefs were gone. "She even took my tooth paste," she said afterward, "and my shoe cream and my soap." The cupboard doors were open, the drawers wide, bits of paper and old tickets lay on the floor

and there were wisps of hair and cotton wool, red with lipstick, on the dressing table. Lovejoy thought of how it had all been carefully made ready, and tears pricked her eyes.

On the table was a tumbler with a little whisky in it and an ash tray that held the butt of a dead cigar; the smell of them was strong. Lovejoy took the tumbler and ash tray and put them outside the door; then she opened the window wide.

"Who is this gentleman that comes to see your mother?" Cassie had asked when her mother had first come home.

"Colonel Baldock," said Lovejoy stiffly.

"As much colonel as that cup!" said Cassie, and for once Lovejoy had agreed with her.

The other gentlemen who had visited her mother had gone away; the colonel did not go away, and Mrs. Mason told Lovejoy to call him Uncle Francis.

"I won't," said Lovejoy.

She didn't like him. Who could like him? thought Lovejoy as she began to make the bed, seeing again his red wet forehead and thick fat hands. He was thick all over, she thought, wrinkling her nose in disgust, and his clothes were horrid and he smelled, like the old ash tray and the dirty glass. Then why, she thought in anguish, did she let him stay and put me out?

Lovejoy had fought; she had brought out all her reserves. "I've got a secret," she had said.

"Have you, lovey?" asked Mrs. Mason idly.

"It's a garden." Lovejoy had said it with a rush because she had not really wanted to tell about it, even to her mother. Suppose she wants to see it? she had thought. She need not have worried.

"Think of that!" said Mrs. Mason and put up a hand to hide a yawn.

"You go on out to the pictures," the colonel had said then, and he had given Lovejoy ninepence. It was hard to refuse that, but Lovejoy put it coldly on the table.

He tried to wheedle her. "Go and buy yourself a nice ice cream."

"I don't like ice creams," Lovejoy had said, which was a lie.

Well, he's gone now, she thought. She picked up the tumbler and ash tray and took them downstairs.



one o'clock! thought Vincent. She was in her ragged pajamas, a blanket had been put round her, but when he touched her bare feet they were as cold as stones; her head leaned against the banister, and her cheek, when he brushed it with his finger, was wet.

Vincent had stood for a moment, looking at the closed door, his mouth in a small straight line. Then he had picked Lovejoy up, carried her downstairs, put her on the old sofa in the kitchen, tucked the blanket round her, and gone back. After a moment he had quietly and firmly knocked.

Now Lovejoy, carrying the ash tray and the tumbler she had washed, went back upstairs. Though the bedroom was perfectly tidy she began to dust it again, wiping down the window with her duster. The glass was dirty with steam and smoke, and slowly, with her finger, she began to write on it. *Mother*, wrote Lovejoy. *Mother*. She got as far as the second *M* when the letters all ran together

"Wash them and put them away," said Vincent. He did not meet Lovejoy's eyes, nor did she look at him.

Once or twice the colonel and Mrs. Mason had had dinner in the restaurant and Vincent had served them silently. After dinner they would go out, as they went out every evening. Later Vincent would hear them return.

One night it had been even later than usual when Vincent switched off the restaurant light to go to bed. Mrs. Combie always left a dim light burning for him on the second floor, and by its faint glow, as he came up, he had seen something white. It was Lovejoy, sitting on the stairs. But it's

in a blur. She rubbed them out with the duster and then knelt down, her head on the window sill.

She had meant to cry, but before any tears came she saw on the sill, hidden under the curtain and forgotten all these days, the pillbox of seeds.

BEFORE going down into the bomb ruin, Lovejoy cast her usual wary look up and down the Street, and there, on his step, was Sparkey, in an overcoat and muffler. She crossed over to the news-stand.

"Where's Sparkey been?" she asked.

"Having his spring bronchitis," said Sparkey's mother. Lovejoy nodded; that was an annual fixture. Sparkey was more than ever thin and transparent-looking, but he had not forgotten the packet. He put out his tongue, and, "You leave him alone," said his mother.

"Of course," said Lovejoy distantly and walked away.

Sparkey watched Lovejoy go through the gap to the ruin; then he stood up on tiptoe to see more.

I haven't been for three weeks, Lovejoy was thinking, and she realized what an interference her mother and Uncle Francis had been. Well, he has gone, she thought comfortably, and her mother was back with the Blue Moons where she belonged. Lovejoy looked round carefully; then she scuttled between the walls, behind the pyramids, till she came round her own two walls to the garden.

There she stood still. Now, on the patch of earth, had come a film of green; when she bent down and looked closely, she could see that it was made of countless little stalks as fine as hairs, some so fine that she could scarcely see their color, others vividly showing their new green. They're *blades*, thought Lovejoy, blades of grass! They must come from a sowing — my sowing, the seeds *I* planted.

She knelt down and very gently, with her palm, she brushed the hair blades; they seemed to move as if they were not quite rooted, but rooted they were; when she held one in her thumb and finger it did not come away. "It's like — earth's fur," said Lovejoy. She said it aloud in her astonishment, and the sound of her own voice made her jump and look up. It was then she heard the whistle.

It was the kind of whistle that is made by blowing on fingers

in the corners of the mouth, a boy's whistle. Boys! Lovejoy crouched down, tense and still.

Lovejoy had thought the bomb ruin was deserted, but there was a camp there, the best-hidden for miles, and it belonged to Tip Malone.

Sparkey knew why the gang had not been to the camp all this time; just as the girls had suddenly taken to skipping rope, now the boys were playing baseball; Tony Zassi, the little American, had taught them. They had played in the park across the river every day all through the Spring holidays.

But now school had begun and the boys were back, and as Sparkey stood straining to see he heard the familiar rabble sound of voices, of scuffling, and the boys came into view, walking and twisting together in a huddle of jeans and corduroy trousers, old darned sweaters and jackets, cropped heads, and weapons, knives and slingshots; it was the gang, and in the middle walked Tip.

Sparkey was husky with emotion as he called, "Tip. Tip Malone."

One of the boys, Puggy, glanced across the pavement but when he saw it was only Sparkey he took no notice.

"Tip," croaked Sparkey. "Tip."

In a pause in his stream of talk, Tip heard; even when he saw it was only Sparkey he stopped. The other boys stopped too. "Well, young 'un?" said Tip.

Sparkey could have melted at Tip's kindness but he held firm. He had an end in view. "I know something you don't," he said.

"Blimey. What cheek!" said one of the boys.

"I do," said Sparkey.

"What do you know?" asked Tip, amused.

"'F I tell you kin I be in the gang?" Sparkey flushed as the boys guffawed. They all guffawed but Tip.

"Aw, c'mon," said Rory, and Puggy twitched Tip's sleeve, but Sparkey looked so miserable that Tip was moved to ask again, "What do you know?"

"He *can't* know anything," said Jimmy Howes.

"I do." Sparkey forgot to croak; his voice was so shrill that it carried right down the street.

"Ssh," said Tip. "D'you want everyone to hear?"

There were murmurs from the gang because Tip was taking this seriously, but Tip was a dictator. "Shut your mouths," he said. "This may be important."

Sparkey swelled with joy and hope; he almost told there and then but he wanted to make his bargain. "'F I tell —" he began when Tip interrupted.

"You can't be *in* the gang," he said reasonably. "You couldn't keep up; you're too small; but I tell you what: we'll keep a place open for you and for now you can be our lookout, our spy."

"A — spy!" said Sparkey. He nearly fainted from joy. "I'll do anything for you, Tip," he said huskily.

"Well, tell us what you've got to tell us, if it *is* anything," said Puggy impatiently.

"I'll tell Tip," Sparkey said, "not you," and he looked at Tip. "There's a girl," he said, "on your ruin."

There was silence while they all turned and looked at the bomb ruin, where nothing, no life, stirred. "Don't be bloody silly," said Tip.

"There is. It's Lovejoy Mason." As he told that Sparkey felt an immense satisfaction. Now he was even with her for the packet. "I think she's building herself a camp," he said.

"A *camp*?" They were outraged.

"What d'you know about that!" said Rory, flabbergasted.

Tip's camp was screened by a bit of an old wall; it was like an igloo built of rubble; there was only a little hole, close to the ground, by which to wriggle in and out. Outside it looked just another pile of bricks and stones; inside it had bunks made of orange boxes, an old icebox for keeping things in, and an older cooking stove in which it was possible to light a fire or heat up a sausage or soup over a candle; drinks were kept in a thermos jug. "It's real drink, sometimes it's beer," whispered Sparkey — he always whispered when he spoke of the camp — and sometimes the boys had cigarettes.

The gang had thought the camp completely secret, but, "She's there now," said Sparkey breathlessly. "I just seen her go in."

For a moment they stood still, then Tip put his two little fingers



in the corners of his mouth and whistled. The next moment they were through the gap, down the bank and in the bomb ruin. There was a violent noise of boots on stones, of hoots and cries, as they hunted among the walls; then they found her, and Lovejoy was surrounded.

One minute the garden was there, its stones arranged, the grass green; the next there were only boots. To Lovejoy they were boots, though most of the boys wore shoes, but shoes with heavy steel tips to the soles and heels. She crouched where she was, while the boots smashed up the garden, trampled the grass, kicked away the stones, scattered the cornflower earth. In a minute no garden was left, and Tip picked up the trowel and fork and threw them far away across the rubble. "Now get out," said Tip to Lovejoy.

Lovejoy stood up; she felt as if she were made of stone she was so cold and hard; then, in a boy's hand, she saw an infinitesimal bit of

green; he was rolling a blade of grass between his finger and thumb; suddenly her chin began to tremble.

"D'you know what we do to girls who come on our land?" said Puggy. "We take their pants off and send 'em home without them."

The boys guffawed. "Shut up," said Tip. "I'm talking."

Tip had seen two things the other boys had not; being in front as they attacked, he had seen the garden whole; he had not had time to look properly but he had a vision of something laid out, green and alive, carefully edged with stones; the other thing he had seen, and saw now, only he did not want to look, was the trembling of Lovejoy's chin. She had not uttered a sound, not cried or protested. The Malones were vociferous. Tip connected females with screams and cries, and here was only this small trembling. It made him feel uncomfortable; he remembered how a puppy's legs, when he had seen it run over, had trembled like that.

"Get out," he said to Lovejoy but less fiercely. As she still seemed dazed he put his hand on her shoulder to turn her, but he should have known better than to touch her; this was Lovejoy, who had thrown the potato knife, who had spat at Angela; she turned her head and bit Tip's hand. She bit as hard as she could, and ran.

When she came through the gap, the boys after her, Sparkey looked down at his shoes and smiled.

CHAPTER 6



ONE of the things that has to be learned is that even sorrow cannot be had in peace, because other people have sorrows too. No boy could catch Lovejoy, and she had had only one thought as she ran, to get to Mrs. Combie. But when she got home Vincent and Mrs. Combie were quarreling.

The trouble had begun with the fifteen pounds the departing Mrs. Mason had given

Mrs. Combie the day before. She had given it to Vincent to pay bills, many of them long outstanding.

The difficulty was to know which to pay first. The High Street grocers? Or Mr. Nichols, the butcher who had been so patient? Or the dairy, or the shoe shop for mending shoes?

Today Vincent had gone out to distribute the fifteen pounds as best he could — but he had not paid anyone. He had come back, his face paper-white with excitement, and seeming to walk on air although he was carrying a heavy parcel.

In it he had a set of dessert plates in different colors, deep green, royal blue, crimson — Mrs. Combie had never seen such colors — and in the middle of each plate was a painting of a lady's head, delicately done in ivory or pink with roses.

"Did you get them at Dwight's?" asked Mrs. Combie uncertainly.

"Dwight's! They're Angelica Kauffman. At least, I'm nearly sure they are, Ettie. I saw them in a shop off Hanover Square three weeks ago. I got them for thirty pounds," said Vincent.

"Thir —" Mrs. Combie's voice went quite away; it was a long time before she got it back. "Fifteen pounds down," Vincent was saying. "I was lucky they let me have them." He stared at the plates with his soul in his eyes. "But, Vincent," said Mrs. Combie when she could speak, "what are they for?"

"We shall serve dessert on them," said Vincent, "for very special clients."

But Vincent, we haven't any special clients. We haven't any proper clients at all, except Mr. Manley, and we haven't — Vincent, it's fifteen pounds *still* to pay! Mrs. Combie did not say any of that but it was said in her silence.

"We can get an overdraft at the bank," said Vincent uneasily.

"We have an overdraft, Vincent. Mr. Edwards said he can't do any more."

"Ettie, you're like a raven, a raven!" said Vincent.

He walked up and down the kitchen, still in his shabby overcoat. "Very well, take them. Sell them," he burst out at last. "Sell them. Or smash them."

"Smash them!" said Mrs. Combie, shrinking.

"You *have* smashed them." Vincent was shouting again. "Don't you see that for me they're smashed?"

Lovejoy, coming into the house, heard Mrs. Combie weeping and took herself out of the way upstairs.

IT WAS an hour or two later that Cassie burst into the Masons' room. She never knocked. One does not knock for children.

"There's a boy wants to see you," she told Lovejoy.

"I don't want to see a boy," said Lovejoy.

"Hoity-toity!" said Cassie. "Well, I've come to make poor Mrs. Combie a cup of tea. You'd better come down and have yours now."

"I don't want any tea."

"Don't you feel well?" asked curious Cassie.

"Quite well," said Lovejoy but she felt neither well nor ill; she felt nothing, nothing at all; she might have been dead. "You can come down or go to bed," said Cassie.

Lovejoy came down, but in the kitchen they had started again — Cassie and Vincent now — and Lovejoy left so that she would not have to hear any more. As she stepped outside a boy came up from the shadow by the side door. It was Tip.

Lovejoy stiffened. "What do you want?" she said, backing against the house wall.

Tip did not see why she should flinch like that. He had not hurt her, while she had left a half circle of little purple marks on his hand; the bite ached still. Nor did he at all understand why he was doing what he did now. "I came to bring you this," he said and held out the garden fork. "I couldn't find the trowel," said Tip, "but we've got a little old shovel you could use."

Lovejoy made no attempt to hold the fork; as she walked away to the edge of the pavement she let it drop from her hand into the gutter; then she sat down on the curb and began to cry.

Tip was one of those boys who are so big and strong that people do not really look at them; they look at their boots, their big young knees and shoulders, their jaws, perhaps, but not at them. "What a young tough," people said of Tip, but his mother, who knew him better than anyone else, said, "He's not tough. He's gentle." Lovejoy divined this at once.

To Lovejoy, Tip was a bitter-enemy boy who had smashed her garden, and yet she, who never cried in front of anyone, who had not cried then, was moved to cry now, in front of him. He did not jeer at her, nor did he go away embarrassed; he picked up the fork and sat down on the curb beside her.

The stone Tip and Lovejoy were sitting on that early May evening was warm; it was the right height from the gutter to be comfortable. Lovejoy was too tired, too numb to think or feel or care for herself or Vincent or Mrs. Combie, but she felt Tip beside her and, through her tears, she noticed him acutely.

She saw the shabby blue jeans, the way his wrists came far out of his gray-colored sweater — it was halfway up his arms — the way his shoes were scuffed. She noticed other things: how hard and bony Tip's arms were; the funny look of his cheek that was bony too and freckled, freckles all over it, thought Lovejoy; his hair was rough; Lovejoy's head only came up to his shoulder, and when he turned to look at her his eyes were dark blue.

As for Tip, he only stole glances at her but she seemed to him small and curiously clean, and he noticed that her hair was beautifully brushed.

They sat together and the tears dried on Lovejoy's cheeks; she told Tip about the garden, beginning with the packet of cornflower seeds and going on to the buying of the fork and trowel — she left out the candlebox — but Tip did not seem to be listening.

"Who brushes your hair?" asked Tip.

"I brush it." Tip, thinking of the screams of his young sisters Josephine and Bridget when his mother brought out the family hairbrush, marveled; but Lovejoy was telling him about the grass seed and the flower seeds — leaving out how she stole them from Woolworth's — and of how the grass had come up. There she stopped.

Tip listened, hitting his leg thoughtfully with the fork. Boys have to hit something, thought Lovejoy irritably. "That's how I made the garden," she said, staring across the road. "My garden," and she gave a little hiccup of misery.

"Make another." Tip was interested. "You were silly to make it there," he said. "Make another somewhere else."

"But *where* else can I make it?" Lovejoy's voice was as sharp and irritated as Cassie's. "There isn't anywhere that boys don't spoil. It wasn't a very good garden," she said, "not what I wanted but—" Her voice trembled as if she were going to cry again.

"What kind of garden do you want?" asked Tip hastily. He only asked to divert her but it brought an answer from Lovejoy, an answer she had not dreamed of before.

"I want an Italian garden," said Lovejoy.

THERE was one walk she had been on with Vincent — long ago, while I was still looking for a garden, thought Lovejoy now. It was a street along the river; its houses were dark red and most of them had small private gardens. "That's what I want," Lovejoy had said, looking into them, "a small private garden." Then they had found a garden they particularly liked.

It was different from the others. It was worked out in stone and it was shapely; in the middle was a small stone urn standing on a pedestal; round the pedestal was a square of grass, clipped smooth and green, and this was bordered with narrow flower beds that were edged with fluted stone. The soil was finely raked and black-looking. "Is that good garden earth?" Lovejoy asked.

"I suppose it is," said Vincent.

"The flower beds in the Square Gardens don't have stone edges," said Lovejoy.

"The Square Gardens are ordinary gardens," said Vincent with scorn. "*This* is Italian."

Vincent had schooled Lovejoy into thinking that everything superbly good was Italian, that everything Italian was superbly good, and she looked at the garden with awe.

"Italian gardens," said Vincent, who had never seen one, "are stone and green, with fountains and vases and walks, not just flowers."

This instant, as she sat beside Tip on the curb, that came into Lovejoy's mind. "I want a garden with stone," she said. "With a vase in the middle and walks —"

When she said "stone" Tip looked up. He stopped beating his leg with the fork. "I know where," he said.

"BUT WE'RE going to the church," said Lovejoy and stopped. She was wary of going into Our Lady of Sion now.

"That's all right, it's my church," said Tip serenely.

"Yours?" Lovejoy was astounded.

"Yes," said Tip firmly, "where I go."

"Go to *church*?"

"Yes. Don't you?"

"I've never been," she said, and looked at him as if he were a phenomenon. "I've never known anyone who went to church."

Tip was suddenly moved to take her hand. "C'mon," he said.

Lovejoy followed him up the outer stairs at the side of the church, which led to the open landing where the rusty bell was.

"Look," said Tip. Behind the landing, and rising a few feet above it, part of the thick wall of the old bombed church still stood. Tip hoisted himself up, in the footholds made by the broken bricks, till he was sitting on top of it. "Can you do that?" he asked.

"Of course," said Lovejoy and came up after him.

"Turn yourself round," said Tip, "and come down." He disappeared behind the wall. "Feel with your toes," he said. There were some broken bits like ledges in the wall. "You kin put your feet on them," whispered Tip. "Gimme your foot and I'll show you. No, the other one. Now down. Hold on tight."

It was hard to hold to a ledge, hanging by a hand while the other groped for the next ledge; below was a heap of sharp rubble and stone that would hurt if one fell on them, but Lovejoy came on down. "Steady! Let yourself down now. You're there!" whispered Tip and she dropped lightly beside him. "Good girl," he said.

She looked round. They were in a space behind the church that once, long ago, had been a graveyard. At one side was the Priest's House, but the two windows that looked down from it were blank and curtained. "It's Father Lambert's bedroom," whispered Tip. "He's only in it at night, and the room above's a storeroom." At the back and on the third side ran a long blank wall. "That's Potter's garage," whispered Tip, "and that's the dairy. Nobody comes here. Most people don't even know it's here. But you could make a garden here — if you kin find a place," he added. "There's a lot of stone," said Tip, looking at the rubble and debris.

There was more stone than Lovejoy had ever seen, bits of broken pillars, and cornices; flutings and chippings; and bits of faces, and hands and wings, and flowers. "They're from the old church," whispered Tip — instinctively they whispered here. "One day they're going to build it new."

"The airplane that shows how much money isn't nearly up," said Lovejoy comfortably. She was quite alive again. Lovejoy had never heard the word "sanctuary" but she knew she had found a safe place for a garden.

She took two steps over the rubble, and then stood still. The last sun was slanting exactly where she needed to look; at the back of the church hut, between stumps where a row of the old pillars had been, was a space, empty and sunny; it was strewn with chips of glass and stone but it was earth; she could see its darkness. It was perhaps seven feet by four, the size of a hearthrug, but big enough, and at one end, as if it had been placed in readiness, was not a vase but a bit of a small broken-off column, whiter than the stumps of the big pillars — "pure marble," whispered Tip, who had come up; marble and fluted, and, as if to prove the ground was fertile, up the little column grew a stem with green leaves, broad and shining, in the shape of hearts.

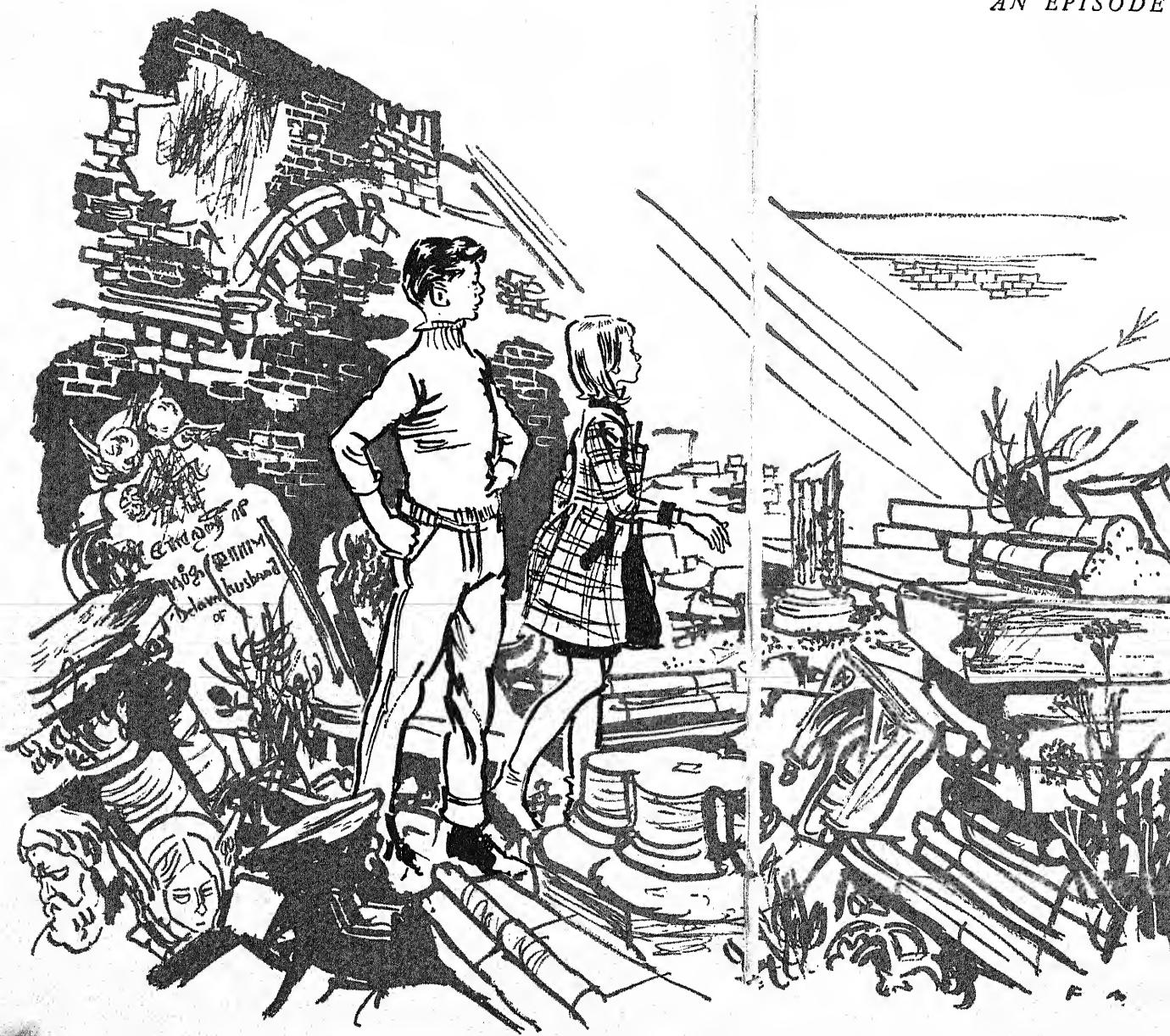
"What is it?" Lovejoy asked Mr. Isbister when she took him a leaf.

"You never seen ivy?" asked Mr. Isbister incredulously. Lovejoy could not remember that she had.

WHEN Lovejoy looked at the plot, considering what to do with it, she found out a surprising thing: where before she had groped uncertainly, now she knew something about gardens; she began searching until at last she picked up a piece of fluted carving. "We must edge the beds with stone like this," she said. She found a broken grave spread with fine marble chips. "We can make paths with this," she said.

She had said "we." Tip began to feel uneasy. He had shown her where she could make a garden, that was enough. "You do what you like," said Tip. "'S your garden, not mine."

"We'll make a lawn here," said Lovejoy as if he had not spoken, "and flower beds here, between the stone edges and the grass. Let's



then he came back. "All right, then, I'll help you," said Tip angrily.

She kept him till it grew cold and eerie in the graveyard. "My mum'll lam me," he said.

"Does she lam you?" asked Lovejoy wistfully.

"Don't they care how late you are?" he asked.

"No," said Lovejoy briefly. Tip began to think there were advantages in being Lovejoy; she could stay out as late as she liked, she was free of church; he began to look at her with a mixture of disapproval and respect.

They worked on; he had to admire the way she did it, soundlessly moving and clearing the stone and glass. Tip's back had begun to ache when at last she stopped. "You've got spunk, I'll say that for you," said Tip, when she stood stiffly up.

"It isn't nearly done," was all she said. "You'll come tomorrow?"

"Me? I've things to do," said Tip loftily.

Lovejoy bent her head again in that quivering silence.

"I promised the others," said Tip not quite as loftily.

"I was going to move that big stone there an' I can't by myself," said Lovejoy sorrowfully. "You told me to make another garden. It was going to be so lo-ve-ly. . . ." In the darkness her whisper seemed to go on and on like a sad little ghost. Tip tried to shut it out but he could not.

"Oh, all right," he said crossly, "I'll come for a little while."

He was soon to learn his mistake. Lovejoy was a tyrant.

"I only came to tell you I can't come," he would begin. But mysteriously he stayed. "Come straight after school," Lovejoy would beg. Her begging was almost as compelling as her silence.

On the second day the patch was cleared, and now began the work of finding the stone. Schooled by Vincent, Lovejoy was meticulous. "That doesn't match," she said to most of Tip's efforts.

"Why does it have to have a stone edging?" asked Tip rebelliously. "Other gardens don't."

"This is an *Italian* garden," said Lovejoy, "a real Italian garden." Words could not describe how she loved the smooth pale stone and the little broken fluted marble column.

Tip began to be infected. It was oddly exciting. There was the excitement of stealing up the Street to the church, of listening,

clinging like limpets to the wall to hear if the way were clear before they came over. If either of them was trailed or saw the other in danger, he was to give three deep hoots like an owl's. "Sparkey can do that too," said Tip.

"He won't be able to," said Lovejoy with scorn.

"I will," said Sparkey at once when Tip told him, but his hoots sounded more like a bat's squeak than an owl's.

Tip had had to tell Sparkey, though Lovejoy objected. "He'll tell if you tell him," she said.

"He'll tell if I don't," said Tip. "He's seen us. He sees everything in the Street. Now he's our spy, he patrols."

A friendship had grown up between Tip and Sparkey, made of worship on Sparkey's side, kindness on Tip's; Tip had taken him one Saturday to watch the baseball, and Sparkey's mother had even let him go to the Malones' to spend the night; now Sparkey was in a quandary. He would have loved to expose Lovejoy — to torture her, he thought, his eyes glittering — but he would have cut his throat sooner than disobey Tip. "It's top secret," said Tip.

Lovejoy had been fearful of Father Lambert. "He lives next door in the Priest's House. He'll catch us," she said.

"Not he," said Tip. "He never knows anything."

They did not see Father Lambert, up above them at his window. Every now and then, when he was in his room, he glanced down at them as, absorbed, they carefully fitted in their pieces of stone to make the garden edges. "He won't know," said Tip. "Besides, I can always pretend I'm going into the church to pray."

"But I can't," said Lovejoy.

Perhaps it was this conversation that made her think of the church; before, she had not raised her head to look at it at all. Its high windows ran all along the back, and from the graveyard the ceiling, the lamps, the top of the altar and some statues' heads could be seen. As she looked up and into the church Tip saw her happy face change; for a moment she was still, then in a strange polite voice she said, "Thank you very much, Tip, but I don't think I'll make the garden here."

Tip followed her eyes. He could see the ceiling, two hanging lights and the top of a blue screen; that's the top of the altar,

thought Tip, the altar in the Lady Chapel. He could see the statue of Our Lady, she stood on the highest pedestal; he could see her head and white veil, the breast of her blue robe, her hand and the Holy Child's gilt halo. Through the glass she looked quite close, as if she were watching them, but what was there startling in that? But Lovejoy's eyes were wide open, not concealed as they usually were, and, as Tip watched, tears of consternation ran out of them.

Do girls do nothing but cry? thought Tip. "What's the matter?" he said impatiently, then more patiently, "What's the matter? Go on, tell." After a moment he put his arm round her.

"Well, no wonder," said Tip when Lovejoy had finished telling.

That was not very comforting. "You mean, no wonder the garden was smashed?" Lovejoy said.

Tip had meant it was no wonder she was frightened, but he was suddenly filled with an irresistible desire to torment this tormenting little creature. He nodded solemnly and Lovejoy quailed.

"Will she smash this one?"

"You couldn't be surprised," said Tip solemnly, and was gratified when the last of Lovejoy's control broke to smithereens. "But what am I to do?" she wailed. "What can I do?"

"You could tell Father Lambert," he said.

"Tell *Father Lambert*?" That seemed to Lovejoy a really idiotic thing to do.

"He'd forgive you and give you a penance."

"What's a penance?"

"A penance is — a penance," said Tip. "It's a sort of punishment that makes things all right again. It would have to be a dreadful one for this. That was *holy* money!" said Tip, shocked.

Lovejoy thought deeply, her tears drying. Then she looked up at Tip. "You give me one," she said.

When Lovejoy looked at him in that trustful way, Tip felt a heady bigness. He said, "I don't know if it would work," but the thought of punishing Lovejoy was so delicious that he had to look at his toes to keep from smiling.

"All right, I'll give you a penance," he said, and then pronounced, "You'll put all those twopences back."

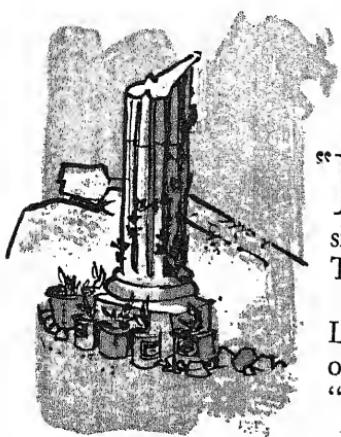
"I haven't any twopences," she said.

"You must get them," said the inexorable Tip. "Get them, not steal them," he said quickly.

Lovejoy's face fell. "How am I to get them, then?" she said, going back to tears. "I'll never get three-and-eightpence. Never," sobbed Lovejoy, and soon, weakly, Tip found himself promising to help. "I'll help you earn it but you must put the money back yourself—in candles," said Tip, feeling his power. "And you'll pay twice as much for each candle, to make up," he said.

"Children are half price," said Lovejoy, fighting, but Tip did not waver.

"You'll pay fourpence each and you'll light them one by one, each time we get a fourpence, and that'll be your penance. Three-and-eightpence is eleven candles. And," he added, seeing a respite for himself, "you're not to touch the garden till the penance is done."



CHAPTER 7

"**H**ERE's sixpence for you," said Tip to Lovejoy. It sounded lordly but that sixpence had taken a week to get. Even to Tip it seemed an interminable time.

"It's not much," he said defensively, and Lovejoy agreed. "I'm going round with Sid on his ice deliveries on Saturdays," he said. "That'll be half a crown a Saturday."

"Half a crown!" said Lovejoy. She was interested now. "We can buy lots of things with that!"

Tip could have pointed out that it would not be her half crown, but he did not think it was worth it. Meanwhile, he had decided the penance was too hard. I was too tough, he thought with the same kind of pleasure with which he had punished her, and he said gruffly, "You needn't do your penance. It's too difficult."

"But I've done it," said Lovejoy.

"You couldn't have."

"I have."

He looked hard at Lovejoy. "You stole it."

Lovejoy was not offended; she knew it was only too likely, but, "I didn't. Honest," said Lovejoy, and it was honest.

"But how, then?" said Tip, bewildered. "How?"

"Ssh," said Lovejoy with a look at the statue. "Ssh, I'll tell you. I had sixpence to begin with," she whispered, "left over from the first candle money —"

"You shouldn't have used that," said Tip.

"The penance was to put back the money," argued Lovejoy, "and that was the money." He supposed it was.

"Then I sold my shoes."

"You *what*?"

In the Malone family shoes were not owned by anyone; they were a child's for the brief period in which he, or she, could wear them, and then were handed down and down as valuable treasures.

"You sold *shoes*?" Tip could not believe it, but Lovejoy went on as if this were nothing strange. "My red shoes to Mr. Dwight for one-and-six." She had let down the hem of one of Cassie's dresses. "She said she'd give me threepence, but then when I'd done it she said I had nicked the stuff and she only gave me two. Dirty cat!" said Lovejoy with venom. "Vincent gave me three for darning his socks." She broke off there. She had a feeling she had not darned them very well. Her conscience was getting tender but only in places; she had not scrupled, for instance, to do an old trick of hers, getting on the bus and pretending she had lost her fare; some kind lady or gentleman would always give the money to her, and, "Then I jump off and run away," she said. Tip did not approve. "But it's hard work," said Lovejoy virtuously. "I had to try four times before I got anything." And she said, annoyed, "They *will* pay the conductor 'stead of giving the money to me."

"I think that's stealing," said Tip. "It oughtn't to count."

"It's not stealin', it's actin'," said Lovejoy stoutly.

"And the rest?" asked Tip, still disapproving.

Lovejoy came closer to him and jerked her head toward the statue. "Tip," she said, "I'm frightened. She does things."

"Does things?"

"Twice," said Lovejoy, "and so quick." Her eyes were wide open, alarmed yet gratified. "Twice, like that," and she brought one palm down with a clap on the other to make a clap of thunder.

"But what did she do? What happened?" said Tip, exasperated. Lovejoy came even closer.

IT HAD happened on the evening of the day when she had gained her eighth candle. She had been going into the church when she saw a big car come purring down Catford Street. All the people in the Street turned their heads to look; they looked still more when the car drew to the curb and stopped. There were two people in it, and when the gentleman got out he went round to the car's other door and helped the lady out; before he did it he threw his cigarette into the gutter. A whole cigarette! thought Lovejoy, rooted on the curb. She watched while they looked for a moment at the Street and the broken steps of the church. They're Real People, thought Lovejoy. Somebodies.

"But what were they like?" Tip asked as she told him.

"He's dark and she's fair," said Lovejoy glibly, then paused. She, who photographed every detail about everybody she met, instantly and certainly, was uncertain about these two.

"They're both brown," said Tip disgustedly when at last he saw them. "Mousy brown, and he has brown eyes, she has gray."

Lovejoy was not even accurate about their clothes, which was extraordinary for her; she saw their clothes, of course, every detail of them, but oddly haloed. The gentleman had a dark gray suit—worsted, thought Lovejoy; he was hatless, and in his breast pocket was a folded white handkerchief—fine Irish linen; it would have a white embroidered monogram on it, like the ones she and Vincent had studied in the Piccadilly shops. On the little finger of his right hand he wore a ring, a signet ring—the family crest, thought Lovejoy, to whom Vincent had talked about crests. Perhaps he's a pearl, thought Lovejoy, to whom Vincent had talked about pearls.

The lady was even better than the gentleman; she wore a plain gray suit—what they call a dressmaker suit, thought Lovejoy, which she knew was not at all the same thing as a suit made by a

dressmaker. The blouse was shell pink, and with it were slim, plain, high-heeled dark brown shoes — because it's a town suit, thought Lovejoy — long, dark brown gloves wrinkled over the wrists, a brown bag and a small brown hat, all to match her long bright brown fur stole. Mink! thought Lovejoy, transfixed; her very bones knew it was mink.

She followed at a respectful distance behind them as they went up the steps. They were talking about the church. "I have to decide if they can have some money," said the gentleman. "They look as if they needed it."

"But, Charles, why you?" asked the lady.

Charles? Lovejoy cocked an ear but it sounded right; there was, after all, Prince Charles.

"It's a trust," he was saying, "for rebuilding churches and making schools — Catholic, of course. My father did it, and my grandfather. It's called the 'Charles Whittacker Adams Trust.'"

"That's your name."

"Yes. That Charles was my great-uncle."

But what was her name? wondered Lovejoy, and then Charles told her. "Careful, Liz," he said as they came to a bad bit of step.

Liz! Could a Somebody be called Liz?

"What a funny little church!" said Liz. She stood in the doorway as Charles went in; he looked round him, then walked slowly along by the walls, looking at the floor, the ceiling.

There were people praying, and Lovejoy slipped past Liz; I'll light my candle quickly and then I can see what they do, she thought.

She bent her knee to the altar as Tip had taught her, and went round to the chapel, where she bobbed again, lit her candle and then knelt.

"You mustn't go in and just take a candle," Tip had said. "You must pray."

"Why?" asked Lovejoy, mystified.

"Because it's polite," said Tip.

"Let me get those flicking pennies quickly," prayed Lovejoy devoutly. She said that each time, and as she rose from her knees she sighed. There were three more candles, twelve more pennies to get,

a whole shilling, and she thought it prudent to add a word. "Quickly, mind," she said to the statue. "And do you know how quick it was?" she said to Tip now. As she had come down the side aisle Liz had smiled at her, beckoned, and given her a shilling.

"Blimey!" said Tip.

"It was blimey," said Lovejoy. "And that was not all."

She had taken the shilling — equivalent to three fourpences, the ninth, tenth, eleventh candles — and, forgetting to thank Liz, she had gone straight back up the church, genuflected, and bought three more candles. Then she went and knelt down. She felt Charles and Liz come up behind her. "Did you see?" Liz asked him. "I gave her a shilling, and —"

"Ssh!" said Charles.

"Do you think she's a little saint?" Liz whispered.

"Little sinner, more likely," said Charles.

"Now we're quits," Lovejoy had just said to the statue, but she was not quite quit; three candles meant three prayers, or she supposed they did.

"Let me get those flicking —" But that, her routine prayer, was finished. Well, what else? thought Lovejoy. "Let Mother come back" — that would have been the prayer a short while ago but, on the whole, she thought Mother was better with the Blue Moons. "Let Mother not come back yet" — that was safer, and, "Let my garden grow." There was one prayer left. "You can ask for anything you want, or anyone else wants," Tip had said; she could have asked for clothes but suddenly she thought of Vincent.

That morning Vincent had been in trouble again; he had come back from Driscoll's with two baskets of strawberries.

"Strawberries already?" Mrs. Combie had said.

"All good restaurants are serving them, Ettie."

The strawberries, with their green leaves, had looked pretty in their chip baskets, but there had been a scene about them. Mrs. Combie was fired to protest. "Can you *see* Mr. Manley, or *anybody*, paying for them?" she had asked. "And there's a chicken come in, and steaks. Oh, Vincent!"

"I used my last prayer for that," Lovejoy told Tip. "Send the lady and gentleman to Vincent," she had commanded.

"Well?" said Tip. "Well?"

"When I came out they were going down the steps," said Lovejoy. "They got in the car and drove —" She broke off dramatically.

"Well?" shouted Tip.

"Drove straight to the restaurant," said Lovejoy.

IT HAD been that rare thing, a perfect evening.

If Vincent had chosen a car to stand outside his restaurant, he could not have chosen a better than the big green one, and no two people could have been nearer his dreams than Charles and Liz. Like Lovejoy, Vincent gave them attributes at once. Charles was young, rich, handsome; Liz was charming.

When they walked in, the restaurant, he knew, had never looked better. Infected by the strawberries, he had bought lilies of the valley for every table.

"On your own head be it," Charles was saying to Liz. Vincent smiled.

"Can you give us dinner?" asked Charles, half doubtfully.

"Of course," said Vincent as if to say, What else? "This table?" He led the way to the best table and pulled back a chair for Liz. As they sat down he saw them looking round in surprise and pleasure, and he smiled again. "We were just driving away when we saw the bay trees," said Liz.

"An *apéritif*?" asked Vincent as he brought his pad. That was a dangerous thing to ask; he had only some sherry and some Cinzano. Don't let them ask for fancy cocktails, he prayed. They ordered sherry, "Medium dry," said Charles; Vincent thankfully poured his best dry sack into his best glasses, brought them to the table and took up his pad again.

"I shall make you an onion omelet," he announced. He did not mean to announce it but he was thinking aloud; eggs and onions of course I have got, he thought. "And then a nice steak *Bercy*?" That will be easy, he thought, and he quickly ran over all he would need — butter, parsley, chopped shallot, lemon juice. "Unless you prefer fish?" he asked. That was dangerous too; there was no fish, but it was Vincent's lucky night. They ordered the steaks. "With *sauté* potatoes," said Vincent, his face intense, "and a salad?"

"What wine have you?" said Charles.

"I'll bring the list," said Vincent as glibly as if he had a real list, and then stopped. "A *barbera* would be good with the steak," he suggested, "or Chianti. I have a *barbera* 'forty-nine —"

Charles ordered the *barbera*. "The omelet will be about ten minutes," said Vincent; then he went through the door to the kitchen and called. "Ettie," he called. "Ettie. Ettie."

When Mrs. Combie came he took her in his arms, pressed a kiss on her forehead, and said, "They've come, Ettie. The people I've always wanted. They've come. Now help me. Help me."

"I'll help you, Vincent," said Mrs. Combie.

They worked with a quiet passion until, the omelet in the pan, the plates warming, Vincent cut bread and slipped on the coat he had hung over a chair. "Put the steaks under," he commanded, "and pray God the potatoes brown in time, Ettie." And he tweaked her ear as he took the bread in.

When the steaks were done the savory butter was piled on top. Vincent said, "I'll bring the omelet plates out; come to the door and take them, then pass me the tray and the other things as I tell you. You, Lovejoy, pass the things to Mrs. Combie from the stove."

In a chain they worked, Vincent's face absorbed, lumpy with worry, but infinitely happy; Charles and Liz watched him, amused and pleased, as he slid the steaks onto their plates, garnished them with water cress. When Vincent had served the wine, he began to mix the dressing for the salad at the table.

"In front of them? Is that polite?" asked Mrs. Combie later.

"Very polite," said Vincent.

"All right?" he asked his clients.

"Superb," said Charles.

"He's Charles, she's Liz," Lovejoy whispered to Mrs. Combie as they peeped through the door.

"They're having strawberries," Mrs. Combie said. Vincent was bringing out one of the baskets. He did not say, "I told you so," he said solemnly, "Bring me one of the Angelica Kauffman plates."

"You mean two?"

"No, one. For her."

"But — won't he mind?"



"You'll see. He'll be pleased," said Vincent.

When he took in the coffee cups, Liz was touching the deep red plate with her fingers. "It's beautiful!" she said.

"I keep them for my most beautiful clients," said Vincent. His heart beat faster in case Charles thought he was impudent, but, sure enough, Charles smiled.

"Vincent," said Mrs. Combie when he came out, "do you think they're in love?"

"A good dinner helps love," said Vincent. "More coffee, Ettie." He had a delighted small grin on his face that made him look like a boy and he kissed Mrs. Combie again. This is what Vincent is really like, thought Lovejoy, happy and sure, not little and worried.

The bill came to three pounds, three shillings. "He'll make a scene," said Cassie warningly as Vincent took it to Charles folded on a plate, but Charles paid it almost without looking. He put down four pound notes and when Vincent brought the change, "Congratulations to the kitchen," said Charles and left the silver.

"It's probably just for once, Vincent," Mrs. Combie said. She had to caution him though it went to her heart to dash the hope in his eyes. It was not dashed. "After this meal," said Vincent, "they'll come back."

He gave Lovejoy sixpence. "From Charles," said Lovejoy reverently to Tip.

"If he gave you sixpence you won't want mine," was all Tip said to this story.

His voice was surly. What was the matter with him? Was he jealous? thought Lovejoy. She did not know that males do not care to be circumvented, however wonderfully, by their females.

"And you're a silly little girl," said Tip. "A statue, even if it's Our Lady, can't *do* things."

He was impressive but Lovejoy only said, "Huh!"

MR. ISBISTER, the barrel-garden man, said it was too late to plant seeds now, she would have to get seedlings, so after a great deal of hovering with her sixpences, Lovejoy bought two marigolds, two alyssums, a daisy and a snapdragon.

"One?" said the shopgirl when Lovejoy bought the snapdragon. And, "Don't ruin yourself," she said when Lovejoy bought the daisy.

Lovejoy had no pots, and she had to plant the seedlings out in tins, a syrup tin, two cocoa tins and a child's old seaside pail she found in a dustbin. "Just for now," said Lovejoy. "Till we're ready." She looked at the long roots of the snapdragon. "When we put them in the beds, we'll have to plant them deep," she said. She brooded over them, and went with Tip to ask Mr. Isbister.

"Must take care of them," said Mr. Isbister. "Young plants are the same — as babies; that's why they call — a seedling bed — a nursery. They need — food and — warmth and quiet and — loving," brought out Mr. Isbister.

"Loving?" asked Lovejoy, astounded. She had never thought of plants as being loved, but, "Yes," said Mr. Isbister curtly.

He took up a flower catalog and began to pore over it.

"What are you going to buy?" asked Lovejoy.

Mr. Isbister did not answer at once; then, "Might be a fuchsia —

or it might be a rose. Last year there was a new little rose, pink-orange, coppery, it was. Costs a guinea," said Mr. Isbister. "Look," and he turned over the pages and then held one up for her to see; it was a colored photograph of a copper-pink rose.

"I don't think it says 'rose,'" said Lovejoy, trying with her usual difficulty to spell out what it did say. "Jim — Jim."

"Jiminy Cricket," said Tip, looking over her shoulder.

"That's its name," said Mr. Isbister complacently.

"Do roses have *names*?" To Lovejoy it made them come almost into the category of people.

"All special flowers have names," said Mr. Isbister. Somebodies, thought Lovejoy. For a moment she was dazzled; then she sighed and went back to her own garden.

The six little plants in their tins looked naked and solitary against the pair of long stone-edged beds. "I had dozens of corn-flower seeds, but how can we buy dozens of cornflower seedlings?" asked Lovejoy. "They're four shillings a box, that's twopence each, and pansies are fivepence."

"I'll get you some," said Tip.

"It took ages to get the candle money." Lovejoy did not mean to be ungrateful but she was beginning to know how quick was time, how inexorable. The earth in the beds was not even dug, she saw the whole garden doomed, and her voice was sharp as she said, "And all that time you only got sixpence!"

Tip did not answer. Soon the silence seemed so long that Lovejoy looked up. He was sitting on his usual bit of stone; his head was bent and he was looking at his fingers. "What's the matter?" said Lovejoy.

"Nothin'," said Tip. That was true; there was nothing the matter with his fingers; it was Tip himself who was hurt.

A new feeling began to be in Lovejoy; it was the first time she had ever hurt anyone and minded. She suddenly found she could not bear Tip's stillness, his bent head and hidden face. She looked round for something she could do. With the fork she began to dig up the earth in the beds, thinking not of what she was doing but of Tip. Suddenly there was a small hard sound; she brought the fork up, put it in, and the sound came again. She looked into the hole



she had dug, remembered the length of the snapdragon roots, and was horrified. "Tip! Tip!" she cried.

No answer. Tip looked at his fingers.

"Tip."

The unhappiness in her voice reached him. "What?" said Tip.

And Lovejoy answered, as if the end of the world had come, "Tip, there isn't enough earth in these beds."

THE LITTLE garden was laid out, enclosed in its stone; the broken pillar rose gracefully with its ivy trail at one end; the beds were outlined with fluted chippings; at the entrance were two cornerstones embossed with lions. But it seemed almost treacherous now. Lovejoy

lifted a stricken face. "We can't do anything at all without earth."

"Let me see," said Tip, but it was true; there was a depth of perhaps four inches of soil before the fork struck stone. Lovejoy threw the fork down in despair and began to cry.

It was a strange thing that Lovejoy, who had scarcely ever cried before, cried continually with Tip; and, when she did it, an equally strange thing happened to Tip; he became both weak and strong. The weakness, a sort of tug, seemed to come from somewhere above his stomach, where his counterpart, Adam, had lost a rib, perhaps; the tug made him do — *anything*, thought Tip helplessly. "Stop crying," he said. "I'll get you some earth."

He meant, bring it from the old garden in the bomb ruin; but Lovejoy's eyes, though still wet, were looking a long, long way beyond Tip. "Good garden earth?" she asked tremulously.

That was something new to Tip. All dirt's the same, he would have said. "Wasn't your old garden good garden earth?" he asked.

"No," said Lovejoy firmly.

"What is good garden earth?"

"The — the Square."

Tip took a deep breath. "Oh well," he said magnificently, "I'll get it from the Square."

CHAPTER 8



"ISN'T it stealing?" Lovejoy asked when the plan was made. She asked because Tip was peculiar about stealing.

"Of course it's not stealing," said Tip now about the earth. "It's only dirt. If we took flowers, or broke off branches, it would be stealing, but dirt's dirt," said Tip reasonably.

"If it's not stealing why do we have to come at night?"

"Because we have to get over the palings," said Tip. "They wouldn't let us do that."

It was not an easy plot; as Olivia said when the Garden Committee discovered the theft, the children should have had a medal for persistence. "And full marks for carrying it all out," she said.

"Marks for stealing?" asked Angela coldly.

"They are not *big* children," said Olivia, "and to wake before dawn three days running and go out into the dark streets shows — enterprise and daring. I should have been frightened, at that age. Then think of the work, those heavy loads. And look how beautifully they did up the buckets."

The buckets had been deadened by being wrapped with two thicknesses of sack, the handles wound round and round with rag. "They'll make first-rate thieves, no doubt of that," said Lucas.

The most difficult part of the plot, really, was the waking. Lovejoy used Mrs. Combie's alarm clock; she fetched it from the kitchen when Mrs. Combie had gone to bed and put it back as she crept out in the queer, colorless morning — but an alarm clock was no good to Tip; he slept through it even if it were put close to his ear. Twice Lovejoy waited and he did not come. "It's no good," he said. "I'll have to get Sparkey."

"Sparkey?" said Lovejoy with distaste.

"Yes. He'll wake me up if I tell him," said Tip. "He'll do anything for me."

"But would his mother let him?"

"She lets him stay with me," said Tip easily. "She knows that I'll look after him. It's only three nights," said Tip. "We ought to be able to take four loads a night."

"But he won't have to *come*," said Lovejoy. "You can leave him in bed."

"That wouldn't be fair," said Tip sternly.

"IT WAS on the morning of May twenty-sixth," Father Lambert was to say when, later, he made his statement to Inspector Russell at the police station. "I sleep in a room at the back of Priest's House," he explained, "overlooking what was the old churchyard. There was a sliding sound, followed by a slithering."

"Is there a difference between sliding and slithering?" asked Inspector Russell.

"The one," said Father Lambert, "is an even sound, as of a rope being let down — which is what it was; the other is uneven like legs."

It was Tip who had let the rope down with the buckets, one at a time; the legs were Lovejoy's, coming over the wall, groping their way down. She had untied each bucket, staggered with it to the garden, emptied it on the beds, taken it back and tied it to the rope again for Tip to draw up.

"Did you recognize the children?" asked Inspector Russell.

"I knew Tip Malone, of course, and I recognized the little girl but I didn't know her name."

"Didn't you *know* what they were doing?"

"Not exactly," said Father Lambert. "What I did know" — and he said this later to Angela — "is that children have to play."

To Lovejoy it was very far from play. When the last bucket was tipped out and she saw the two flower beds filled with fine black earth, good garden earth, she had a feeling of such triumph and satisfaction as she had never known. "Who plants a garden plants happiness," says the Chinese proverb. In that moment Lovejoy was absolutely happy.

And then she started to worry about how to get a lawn. "In Catford Street you can't sow grass seed now," Mr. Isbister had said. Lovejoy puzzled and puzzled how to get over that until one afternoon in school she was sent on a message to the kindergarten room. There Lovejoy saw, standing on trestles under the window, pans filled with something dense and short and green. "What is it?" she asked.

"Gracious, child, haven't you ever seen mustard and cress?" said Miss Challoner, the teacher.

"It looks like very special grass," said Lovejoy.

"It's for eating."

"*Eating?*" Lovejoy was shocked.

"You buy it in twopenny packets," said Miss Challoner, "and sow it thickly; it will come up anywhere, even on flannel."

"Even on not much earth? Even if you sowed it now?"

"Yes," said Miss Challoner.

Perhaps she sensed Lovejoy's burning interest because she opened her desk and said, "I have some over. Would you like these?" and into Lovejoy's hands she put half a dozen packets. Lovejoy's thanks were so fervid that Miss Challoner asked her name.

"You have a very responsive and charming little girl in your class," Miss Challoner was to tell Lovejoy's teacher, Miss Cobb.

"Lovejoy charming?" asked Miss Cobb, who saw only Lovejoy's inscrutable small mask.

With the mustard and cress sown thickly all over the patch, Lovejoy had the prospect of a lawn, but there were still only the six little seedlings in the beds — "And they're a mistake," said Lovejoy restlessly.

"What are you thinking of *now*?" said Tip. Lovejoy did not answer but he knew. Something special.

The next Saturday Tip began work. "Delivering ice," said Tip. "Ugh." On Monday he came to Lovejoy in the garden.

"Here's half a crown," he said. He might have been a husband handing over his first pay; he gave it proudly but resentfully. "I went the rounds the whole blooming day, and was that ice dirty and heavy!" He grumbled but all the same he was proud that he, Tip, had earned his first real money — a huge big lot, he thought, but Lovejoy held the coin with her head bent over it. "Well?" said Tip belligerently.

"It isn't enough," said Lovejoy.

"Not *enough!* It's half a crown!" He sat down beside her, feeling suddenly tired. "What do you *want?*" he demanded.

"A box of pansies," said Lovejoy instantly.

"A box?" said Tip in alarm. "They're fivepence each. A whole box would be —" Words failed him.

"Ten shillings sixpence," said Lovejoy calmly.

She said nothing more, and Tip's heart sank; then, sitting beside her, he found himself distracted from the pansies. He was noticing how she had a ridge of very fine short hairs on the back of her neck, soft as down, mouse-colored but tipped with gold; they looked as if they were protecting the tender knobs of her spine; gently Tip put out his finger and felt those little bones. Then he sighed. It was no

good; even when Lovejoy was difficult and ungrateful he found it impossible to be angry.

"All right," said Tip. "I'll go on with the ice," and, as if that gave him the right, he put his hand on her neck.

"You'll only have to give me three more Saturdays," said Lovejoy under his hand. "I'll get the sixpence," she said generously. Then she stopped, her face unhappy again. "In three weeks it'll be too late," she wailed. "Mr. Isbister says pansies have to be planted now." Tip took away his hand.

THAT AFTERNOON Lovejoy went to Vincent's favorite green-grocer shop, Driscoll's in Mortimer Street. Mr. Driscoll, wearing a white apron doubled round his waist, was standing in the shop talking to a man whom Lovejoy thought she knew; the man had on a long old-fashioned overcoat and a bowler hat and was pointing to vegetables and fruit with a stick. After a moment Lovejoy recognized him; it was Mr. Manley, who came to Vincent's for dinner twice a week.

"Two asparagus," said Mr. Manley, pointing to the fat bluish and cream bundles. "See they're slender, none of your thick sticks, John, and is that English spinach?"

"Just in," said Mr. Driscoll.

"Put in two pounds," said Mr. Manley, "and three of Jersey potatoes."

As Lovejoy listened she began to think that Mr. Manley had very good meals in his house, as well as at the restaurant.

"That's the lot," he said at last in the abrupt way that offended Vincent. "Send them round quickly."

"The boy will take them straight away," said Mr. Driscoll.

Most people, Lovejoy knew, did not have their greengroceries sent straight away. Mr. Manley must be Somebody, thought Lovejoy, even if Vincent did not think so.

Driscoll's, she knew, was for Somebodies. She had come only because, for what she wanted, there was no use going to Woolworth's; there they held onto the plants until you paid the full price; besides, there were no plants better or fresher than the ones in the boxes outside Driscoll's; she had often looked at them longingly.

"Well, little girl? What can I do for you?" Mr. Driscoll had come back from taking Mr. Manley to the door.

"I want—" But before she had time to finish her sentence Mr. Manley had come back.

"John, I forgot. I shall want something special on Thursday—" Then he paused, seeing Lovejoy. "I beg your pardon," he said to her as if she were quite grown up. "I didn't see you."

"The little girl can wait," said Mr. Driscoll at once, but Mr. Manley waved his stick in his strange abrupt way and said, "Go on. Go on. Strict turns, John. No favoritism."

"Well, what *do* you want?" Mr. Driscoll said to Lovejoy.

Lovejoy was fingering Tip's half crown nervously, trying not to let it get sticky, but her voice was high and clear as she answered. "I want to buy a box of pansies on the installment plan," she said.

"On the *installment plan*?"

"Yes," said Lovejoy and, as Mr. Driscoll did not appear to understand, "on easy terms," she said.

"She knows all the words," said Mr. Driscoll to Mr. Manley.

"I'll give you half a crown down," said Lovejoy, "and half a crown a week for three weeks and sixpence at the end." She held out the half a crown, but Mr. Driscoll, though he was laughing, shook his head.

"We don't sell plants like that," he said.

"You do if there's a guarantee," said Mr. Manley. Mr. Driscoll stopped laughing. "Do you know this child?" asked Mr. Driscoll.

"No," said Mr. Manley, which was true. Lovejoy had seen him many times but he had not seen her. "I don't know her, but I think she'll pay. Give me your pad."

Mr. Manley wrote: *Pansies, one box. Ten shillings.* He ignored the sixpence. "When you give a big order, ignore the pence," he told Lovejoy. Lovejoy nodded, and Mr. Manley wrote *2/6* four times. "You cross one off a week," he said to Lovejoy. "Got your half crown?" She nodded again. "Hand it over." She handed it to Mr. Driscoll, who crossed off the first *2/6*. "See that he does it each time," said Mr. Manley gravely, "otherwise he might cheat you"; and underneath he wrote his own name. He wrote just Manley, without the initial.

THE PANSIES filled the beds completely. "You see," said Lovejoy to Tip, and indeed their colors against the stone were like jewels, she thought. They were not really like jewels, they were flower colors, truthful and glowing, but they were as precious as jewels to her. "You're mad about those pansies," Tip grumbled.

The mustard and cress was not as good; it was showing but there was a patch that was almost bald. "Those seeds must have crept about under the earth," said Lovejoy, furious.

She went off among the rubble and presently came back with something that was round, and set with shattered bits of glass.

"What is it?" asked Tip.

Neither of them knew; it was the bottom of a glass bell that had held everlasting flowers for a grave; the bottom was zinc, edged with a painted white tin frill. "Isn't it pretty?" asked Lovejoy. The glass was broken now, but, "It will make a very special sort of flowerpot," said Lovejoy. "It fits here, on this bare patch," and she set it down and looked at it, breaking off one or two bits of glass that were left. The bare patch was hidden. "Isn't it pretty?" asked Lovejoy again. "We must fill it with earth."

"Not more earth!" said Tip.

"More earth," she said inexorably.

"But what will you put in it?" asked Tip, alarmed.

Lovejoy looked away, thoughtfully and dreamily; then, "Do you remember Jiminy Cricket?" she asked.

A DUCK had gone bad in the larder, and Vincent brought up, for the hundredth time, it seemed to Mrs. Combie, the question of a big refrigerator. "I tell you we must have it," said Vincent.

"We can't. We can't pay for it."

"Then we must borrow. Now, *now* is the moment," cried Vincent. "At last I begin to gather my clientele, the clientele I want."

"Vincent, a big refrigerator costs —"

"You're always dinning figures into me," shouted Vincent. "Figures, and it hurts."

Mrs. Combie had had a very painful interview with Mr. Edwards, the bank manager, that week-end and now she had to persist. "Why not wait?" she asked in a breathless voice, twisting the

apron strings tightly round her finger. "Wait till more people like the lady and gentleman come."

"And give them duck gone bad?" asked Vincent icily.

A few days later he was able to say grandly to Mr. Manley, "Would you care to try something else tonight? Chicken *sauté à l'ancienne*? Or fillet of sole *à la Russe*, perhaps?"

"You're very splendidiferous," said Mr. Manley.

"Yes," said Vincent, smiling. "At last we are equipped, almost. I'm happy to say we have installed a full-sized refrigerator."

"Umph," said Mr. Manley. He ordered a plain steak.

With Vincent it had been the big refrigerator; with Lovejoy it was the empty flowerpot. For several days after she put it in the garden Tip had not come near her. "I won't get more earth," he had said flatly. "I've got things to do."

"What things?" asked Lovejoy.

"Things with the boys," said Tip. "Boys!" he bellowed desperately. A sudden wisdom had told Lovejoy to leave him alone.

I don't miss him, she told herself proudly and, as a matter of fact, she did not miss him as badly as she would have done a little time ago. These days the statue seemed to be with her in a way that was companionable. I don't mind her now, thought Lovejoy, I quite like her.

She's always been here, thought Lovejoy easily; why should I mind her? She knows all about me.

Mary was Jesus' mother, even the ignorant Lovejoy knew that, but she was also, according to Tip, everyone's mother. "I've got a mother of my own," Lovejoy told her jealously. "When my mother comes back I won't need you," said Lovejoy; that sounded rude and perhaps ungrateful, and after a while she found a potted-meat jar and washed it so clean that it sparkled, filled it with pansies and took it into the church. People often put bunches of flowers round the pedestal, and Lovejoy put her jar at its foot. "When these are dead I'll bring you some more," she said, kindly.

ONE EVENING soon after, when she was clambering over the wall from the garden, down the Street came the big green car. She

CHAPTER 9



O LIVIA always spoke of "that morning," but it really began the evening before, the evening Jiminy Cricket came.

Lovejoy did not have to go and find Tip. He came to the garden. He had brought Lovejoy half a bag of hard candies but when he saw the little rose he stopped. "Where did you get that?" he asked suspiciously. When Lovejoy, still dazed, told him he said, "You shouldn't take presents from people you don't know."

That was one of Mrs. Malone's maxims but it was news to Lovejoy; she had always supposed one should take all one could get. "And I do know Charles," she said, which was an unfortunate remark.

"If you've got him, you don't want me," said Tip and turned away with his bag of sweets.

"I do want you," said Lovejoy, running round in front of him. "Oh, please! I can't do without you," said Lovejoy.

"Honest?" said Tip, and a glow began to come on his face.

"Oh yes!" said Lovejoy earnestly. "You see, we must get that earth tonight." Then, "Why have you gone all cross again?" she asked.

"Think why," growled Tip, but Lovejoy would not think and she began to wheedle him.

"It only needs one more bucket of earth," she crooned, "one bucket and the garden's made. Tip. Help me. We must get that earth tonight. . . ."

"BUT THAT evening wasn't only for us, it was for everybody," said Lovejoy later. It was strange how it came together for all of them — for instance, the Combies.

Vincent had been serving coffee in the restaurant when there

came a knock at the side entrance. "Will you go, Ettie?" he asked, and Mrs. Combie took her tired body to the door.

"Why haven't you people got a telephone? Is Bertha in?"

The voice was so loud and jovial that it jarred.

"Bertha?" Mrs. Combie held the doorjamb.

"Bertha. Mrs. Mason. I'm her agent, Mr. Montague."

"She's in Brighton with the Blue Moons," said Mrs. Combie, silently taking in the good blue overcoat, black hat, red face, and smell of soap and brilliantine and cigars.

"So that's her line," said Mr. Montague. "Oh well!" he said and lifted his hat. "In that case, good night."

"But — wait." Mrs. Combie was collecting herself. "Isn't that all right?"

He shrugged. "Maybe, for all I know," he said. "One thing I do know. She isn't with the Blue Moons."

"Why? Why not?" said Mrs. Combie faintly.

"They're in Jersey, dear, be there all summer. I booked them myself. Look here," he said. "Have some sense. Bertha hasn't been with the Blue Moons for three years. She's had odd jobs here and there, that's all. I can't do miracles," said Mr. Montague. "I have a fill-in job for her now, but if she's not here —"

"If she isn't with the Blue Moons in Brighton," said Mrs. Combie slowly, "where is she?"

"Haven't the faintest," said Mr. Montague. "Well, good night."

"But —" Mrs. Combie caught at his sleeve. "Wait, Mr. Montague. There's Lovejoy."

"The kiddy?" For a moment Mr. Montague seemed troubled. "Did Bertha do that? I wouldn't have thought it of her." Then he withdrew. "So she's made a muggins of you? Bad luck."

"But —" cried Mrs. Combie wildly.

He stepped back out of her reach. "A theatrical agent has no responsibility. Good night," said Mr. Montague.

It was that evening too that Angela discovered that Lucas had disobeyed her and the Garden Committee, and had not slept in the shed to keep watch at night. "Not even once," said Angela.

"No more earth has been taken," said Lucas defensively.

"That's not the point," said Angela. "You were given orders."

Lucas looked sullen.

"If you don't want to leave," said Angela, "you will sleep in the shed tonight."

It was at half past five the next morning that Tip put Lovejoy and Sparkey over the Square Gardens' palings. From the beginning it felt disastrous; it was raining hard; Sparkey was soaked already. "You're wet through," said Tip, worried. Sparkey's mother had let him go with Tip only because she wanted to go away for the night herself. "Last time he was all tired out," she had said.

"I'm wet too," said Lovejoy, but Tip took no notice of that.

Lovejoy was not popular with Tip that morning. She was never popular with Sparkey, who turned his big eyes on her with hate.

No whisper had come to Lovejoy of Mr. Montague's visit, but when she had come in last night Vincent had gone out without speaking to her and Mrs. Combie had told her to go to bed in such a flat, dull way that Lovejoy thought they must have quarreled again.

Lovejoy did not know what the trouble was — she did not hear Mrs. Combie say, "Vincent, I'm going to the police tonight" — but trouble had filled the house and she had never been more glad to see Tip than now; but for Sparkey she would have snuggled against him. In a passion of warmth and gratitude she had said, "Hello, Tip," and now Tip was being unkind. "It's the last time," she told him earnestly. "I'll never bother you again."

"Don't tell lies," said Tip. He did not lift her carefully but, when she sprang, he jounced her up on top of the folded raincoat they put for a pad on the palings. "Ooh!" whimpered Lovejoy as she jumped down.

"Get on with it," said Tip. To his shame, he could not get over the palings. The Malones were big but they were not meant for springing.

The rain dripped off Lovejoy's nose as she dug; the handle of the shovel grew slimy with mud; her feet felt as if her socks and shoes were made of mud. All Sparkey did was to stand by her and sniff. "Stop it," she said sharply; he wiped his nose with the back of his wet hand and sniffed worse than ever.

"Hurry up," hissed Tip, waiting outside for the bucket.

"I can't. It's wet and heavy," said Lovejoy.

"Sparkey, for Pete's sake help her," said Tip impatiently.

"Lemme dig," said Sparkey.

"You can't," said Lovejoy. "You're only a baby."

Sparkey gave the shovel a sharp kick; it jerked up, throwing wet earth in Lovejoy's face. "It's in my eye," she screamed.

"Shh! Shh!" said Tip, but Lovejoy would not shh.

"He's thrown mud in my eye."

"Bring the bucket," said Tip angrily. Lovejoy was sobbing loudly but Sparkey noticed that, though she was so hurt, she stopped to fill the bucket to the brim. Together they lugged it to the palings; the wet earth was very heavy and it took all their strength to lift it up.

At last Tip's hand caught the handle and hoisted it to the top. "Feels as if you'd got the whole blasted garden," said Tip so crossly that Lovejoy began to whimper again. "My eye hurts," she said.

"Well, come *out*," said Tip, exasperated. Lovejoy shinned up the tree that overhung the palings and began to wriggle out along a branch.

"Wait. You haven't helped me," said Sparkey.

"You help yourself," said Lovejoy.

"You know I can't. My legs are too short."

"Try," said Lovejoy treacherously; already she was nearly out.

"I can't. I can't reach," said Sparkey frantically. Now he was alone in the garden all his bravado left him. "Lovejoy," he screamed.

"Jump," said Lovejoy and she dropped off the branch into the road and ran wailing to Tip.

Sparkey tried to jump. He tried to get off the ground, to leap and catch the branch.

"Where's Spark?" he heard Tip say.

"Coming," said Lovejoy glibly.

Sparkey was too frightened to call; when he saw Lucas he tried to run, but he was caught from behind, and a hand was clapped over his mouth.

If Lucas had known how big Tip was he would have locked Sparkey in the shed and gone for Angela or the Admiral. As it was, hearing Lovejoy wailing outside, he concluded they were all small and, walking craftily on the grass, holding Sparkey under his arm, he undid the gate and came stealthily round on the pavement.

With a corner of his not very clean handkerchief, Tip was wiping out Lovejoy's eye and he had his arm round her to steady her; he was bending down so that Lucas saw their two heads together, and they looked small children to him; he also saw the bucket in the road. "Got the lot red-handed," he said and pulled Angela's whistle out of his pocket and blew it.

The steadiness of Tip showed at that whistle. "Stand still," he said to Lovejoy. "We can run much faster than he can." He drew the last grit out of her eye. "C'mon," he said, picking up the bucket. It was then he saw that Lucas had Sparkey. "Run. Leave the bucket. Run," he told Lovejoy and went to meet Lucas.

At the same moment Sparkey wriggled free. Lucas snatched at him, but Sparkey twisted away. There was only one way to stop him and Lucas kicked his legs. With a scream of pain Sparkey doubled up on the pavement.

It was too much for Tip. "Kick someone y'r own size, y'old b——," he shouted at Lucas.

Lucas was in a temper. "Kicking's too good for you little swine," he said. As Sparkey got up, Lucas booted him again.

Tip's cheeks grew red and he lowered his head and ran at Lucas; his head hit Lucas full in his soft old stomach; Lucas gave a sound as if a gust of air had blown out of him, and doubled up; his knees crumpled and he sank on the pavement.

Is he dead? thought Tip, crouching down. As he thought it a hand took him by the collar; he could not see whose hand it was, but it felt authoritative; he knew it was the police. With all his force Tip bellowed at Sparkey and Lovejoy, "Run. Run."

Sparkey obeyed. Without looking back, hopping and limping, limping and hopping, he ran down the Square toward the Street, but Lovejoy would not leave the bucket. "Leave it, you little fool. Run," shouted Tip, but she would not let it go. The bucket

was too heavy for her by herself, but she dragged it along, bumping it on the pavement, her arms nearly pulled from the sockets. She heard the short blasts of another whistle; windows were pushed up in the houses, doors opened, but she kept on.

At the edge of the palings she turned to look and knew she need not hurry. The policeman was not coming after her; still holding Tip, he was bending over Lucas, who was writhing on the pavement. Then round the corner came a second policeman, and a voice floated out from the steps of Number Eleven. "Constable, I am Miss Chesney of the Garden Committee. That is the gardener who is hurt. Bring him in here. And the boy, too." Her voice was clear in the Square, high and imperious; a lady's voice, thought Lovejoy, and shrank back against the palings. The two policemen bent to lift Lucas, though the first still kept his hold on Tip. Now's my chance, thought Lovejoy, who had to cross the road, but oddly enough she did not take the chance; she stood and looked back at Tip, left there with the policemen.

Tip. Lovejoy had a sudden feeling of his arm round her. "Leave the earth. Go back to him," the feeling said to her. Tip. Tip! Lovejoy began to tremble; then her coolness returned. "He's caught. There's nothing you can do and you must save the earth," said the coolness, and she picked up the bucket and staggered across the road. As she reached the pavement there was a sound of sobbing and hobbling. It was Sparkey turning back.

"They've got Tip," cried Sparkey, anguished. "I didn't know they'd got Tip," and he ran past her.

"Sparkey, don't go," commanded Lovejoy. "Spar-key! They'll catch you too. Come back." But he went on running, bellowing, "Tip." He's doing what I wanted to do, thought Lovejoy. Half ashamed, half jealous, she hung between running back and going.

The policemen were going in at Number Eleven; one had taken Lucas, the other marched Tip, and Tip was fighting. With a sudden sinking of her selfish little stomach, Lovejoy watched. Sparkey ran full tilt into them. "Don't be silly," Lovejoy told herself and began to drag the bucket again. It was then that Olivia, coming out of Number Eleven, had seen her.

THE MOST Lovejoy could do, straining and pushing and panting, was to get the rim of the bucket level with the top of the wall and tilt it so that the earth fell over. The earth was so wet that it fell all together, making a resounding plump. It'll be there, thought Lovejoy. Now she had to climb over and scoop the earth up.

There was enough to fill the pot and soon it was all ready to hold Jiminy Cricket. Lovejoy forgot the whole miserable morning, the police, Sparkey, even Tip, as she knelt down and loosened the tiny rose tree from its little pot; carefully she spread its roots out — they were like brown lace — stood it in the flowerpot, and patted the roots down, pressing earth in among their fine threads; then she brought more and more earth in hand scoops till the roots were firm and the tree standing up; she made the earth firm all round to the top, and there was Jiminy Cricket blooming in the garden.

How long she knelt and looked, Lovejoy did not know; then, far over her head, from behind the houses, came the sound of the Angelus. Seven o'clock. She was reminded of Tip.

What will they do to him? thought Lovejoy. Will they take him away? They'll tell Mrs. Malone, thought Lovejoy, and quailed; the whole Street will know, and we haven't finished paying for the pansies. What will Mr. Driscoll do? Will he ask for them back — as Mrs. Combie was always threatening Vincent about the refrigerator, which had also been bought on time? But in one thing the pansies were different from the refrigerator: Mr. Driscoll did not know where they were.

The garden was safe here, behind the church, tucked away; no one, no Driscoll or policeman, could find it. Not even Sparkey knew just where it was. No one knew. No one, unless Tip told.

Lovejoy knew Tip would not tell lies. He never will, she thought in despair, and he'll have to say *something*. She herself was glib — but I'm not there, she thought distractedly.

Dare I go and ask? she thought. Knock and ask if Tip's there? I'm so dirty, she thought in dismay; Number Eleven seemed a very big, important house to her.

She gave a great shiver, put out a finger and touched Jiminy Cricket, and started across the rubble to go back.

"YOU NEEDN'T come," said Angela to Olivia.

In a long coat and the hat with the blue wings, the avenging-angel hat, Angela was ready to go with Lucas to the police station.

"I'm coming," said Olivia, and with unaccustomed boldness she said, "I saw it all. I might have something to say too."

At the police station they had to wait a little — "For the boy's father," the constable said. But at last they were shown into a room that was bare except for a big old battered desk with a chair behind it and, along the whole side wall, a fixed bench, marked and blackened with use — from all the people who have sat on it, thought Olivia, been made to sit on it, lost children, pickpockets, drunks, prostitutes. Now Tip, who had fought so indignantly, and Sparkey sat there, and with them was a man, a huge man, thought Olivia.

An inspector came in and sat down at the desk; he was tall in his uniform, and bareheaded; Olivia noticed his smooth brown hair. Behind him was a younger, even bigger policeman, who stood waiting. "What would he be?" Olivia whispered to Angela.

"He's the jailer," said Angela. "Here to do what is needed."

"The jailer?" Olivia shrank back.

"Don't be silly," said Angela. "People don't get brought in here for nothing." Olivia's heart began to beat uncomfortably.

The inspector gave her, as well as Angela, a quick look. Summing us up, thought Olivia. She listened quietly, almost from habit letting Angela handle this.

Angela had already begun. "I am Miss Angela Chesney. This is Lucas, the gardener, who was hurt." She did not introduce Olivia but went on, "Now, Officer —"

"Inspector Russell," said the inspector quietly. "I'm sorry we kept you waiting. As you see, Malone's father has come now." The jailer motioned and the man and the boys stood up.

The inspector turned to Mr. Malone. "Your wife's not back from work?"

"No, sir." Mr. Malone spoke in a thick, low, blurred voice as if he did not understand what was happening. "She does a night shift, sir."

"And the small boy's mother is away?"



"Just for the night, sir. He's staying with us."

Mr. Malone looked big and bewildered as he stood beside Tip, his cap in his hand — like an ox, thought Olivia, an ox suddenly put under a yoke. "Look," he said to the inspector, "couldn't we wait? The missus'll be home soon."

"These ladies have waited nearly an hour already," said the inspector. "You're the father. We must carry on." He looked at Tip and Sparkey and then at the constable. "Well, what is this all about?" he asked. The constable cleared his throat, but before he could speak, "We stole," said Sparkey with pride.



"We didn't steal," said Tip, red-faced.

"We stole," said Sparkey.

"We didn't," said Tip.

"Now wait. Wait," said the inspector and motioned to the constable to begin again.

"At five forty-five this morning," said the constable, "I was at the junction of Mortimer Street where it joins Mortimer Square —"

"It begins long, long before that!" Angela broke in. "These children . . ." and she went eloquently on.

The boys' eyes grew round with surprise as they listened to Angela. Shears? Iris plants? They began to be shocked. It looked as if the lady were telling lies; indeed, the inspector stopped her. "You mean the shears and plants disappeared?" he said. "But there is no evidence the children took anything but earth."

"Evidence?" said Angela, nettled. "What evidence do you want? I think they are an organized gang of young thieves."

"Let's keep to what we can prove," said the inspector.

"They took thirteen loads of earth," said Angela.

"Thirteen?" Even the experienced Inspector Russell was amazed.

It was then that Olivia again made her speech about the full marks for persistence. Tip looked at her appreciatively.

A third policeman had come in and stood waiting by the desk.

"Yes?" asked the inspector.

"There's another of them, sir. Says she belongs. A little girl."

"Does she belong?" the inspector asked Tip.

"No," said Tip.

"Yes," said Sparkey.

"She's just as wet and dirty, if that's anything to go by, sir," said the policeman.

The inspector asked Tip again, "You're sure she doesn't belong?"

"Yes," said Tip.

"No," said Sparkey.

Then Olivia spoke. "There was a little girl. I saw her."

Tip looked at Olivia as if she were a traitor, and the inspector nodded to the policeman. As Lovejoy came in, all bedraggled, her feet left wet marks on the floor. She had dared at last to knock at the back door at Number Eleven. "They've taken those boys to the police station," said Ellen, the elderly maid who had answered. "They're very naughty boys," she had added severely.

The inspector asked Lovejoy her name and where she lived.

"Lovejoy Mason. Two hundred and three Catford Street." It was so small a whisper that the inspector could hardly hear.

"Did you say 'Lovejoy Mason'?"

"Yes."

He spoke in an undertone to the jailer, who went out of the room and came back with some papers. The inspector took them

and nodded, then looked at Lovejoy. "I've heard of you," he said. "You live with a Mr. and Mrs. Combie?"

"Yes."

"Harris," said the inspector. "Send word to Mrs. Combie."

The jailer went to the door, and the inspector told Lovejoy to sit down. "We can go on with the boys," he said, and listened while the constable finished his account. When it was over the inspector sat, thoughtfully drumming his fingers on the desk. "What made you think you weren't stealing?" he asked Tip.

"It was dirt," said Tip. His voice was husky and desperate, and he cleared his throat loudly in an effort to explain. It was a rude sound, and Angela raised her eyebrows. "You can't steal dirt," said Tip. "It — it's —" and he remembered something he had learned about land in history lessons. "It's common," he said.

"It may be," said Angela, "but in London it's scarce and valuable." And she said, "You can buy it at the Army and Navy Stores, two-and-six for fourteen pounds, packed in cartons."

Olivia made a sudden strangled noise, and all their eyes turned on her. Is she laughing? thought Lovejoy, shocked.

"Olivia, be quiet," said Angela. "You make me ridiculous."

"Not you, it. It's ridiculous," said Olivia.

The inspector was not laughing. He was looking at Tip.

"It looks very like stealing to me." His voice was grave. "A mean kind of stealing. The gardener said you put the smaller ones over the palings to do your work for you. That's mean, isn't it? Then you attacked an old man doing his duty, and kicked him."

"I didn't kick him."

"He says you did."

"He's a liar."

"He kicked Sparkey." Lovejoy had unveiled her lids and spoke straight at the inspector. "Pull down your sock," she commanded Sparkey, "show them." Sparkey, beaming, peeled down his gray cotton sock, and on his lean little shin was a great mark. But once again Lovejoy was to know the overriding power of grownups.

"Lucas kick a child!" said Angela. "Never."

"Not never. This morning," said Lovejoy.

"Never laid a hand on him," said Lucas.

"Are you sure?" asked the inspector.

"I only nabbed him," said Lucas. "Course he didn't like that. Don't you listen to them, mister. That's a bad boy," he said vindictively, jerking his thumb at Tip. "A young devil."

"He's not," said Mr. Malone in a bellow.

"He isn't," cried Lovejoy, coming up like a jack-in-the-box. "You should have seen him taking the grit out of my eye," and as usual the thought of herself and Tip overwhelmed her with tears. "It was all *me*," she sobbed now, as Eve must have sobbed. "He wouldn't have been caught if I'd jumped Sparkey up. I told him what to do and he did it." She covered her face with her hands and the tears ran out between her fingers.

"What do you say to that?" the inspector asked Tip, but Tip was furious.

"I don't take orders from a girl," said Tip.

"Did he?" the inspector said suddenly to Sparkey.

"No," said Sparkey with scorn. "She wasn't in the gang. Girls can't be," he said loftily to Lovejoy.

The inspector looked thoughtfully at Sparkey. "You're too small to be in the gang, of course," he said.

Sparkey's ears went red. He looked as if he were going to cry. "I *am* in the gang, amn't I, Tip?" he asked.

"It can't be much of a gang," said Inspector Russell.

"It is!" cried Sparkey furiously. "It's the worst gang for miles." And he flung at the inspector, "Maxey Ford was in it."

"Maxey Ford." Now the inspector's face, as well as his voice, was grave. He looked at Tip. "I am sorry to hear that. You know what happened to Maxey."

"Yes," said Sparkey reverently, and he declared, in an access of loyalty, "Tip's much better at stealing than Maxey."

"Oh, shut up, Spark," said poor Tip, but Sparkey took this for modesty and went on, "Tip's *chief*; Maxey never was."

There was a moment's pause, then Angela's voice came, clear and imperious. "It seems quite obvious, Officer —"

"Inspector Russell," said the inspector.

Angela makes them angry by not thinking of them, thought Olivia. She thinks it doesn't matter, but it does.

"Inspector, then," said Angela impatiently. "It's obvious that this boy should be charged."

"But on what charge?" said the inspector.

"What charge?" said Angela. "I shall charge him with stealing the earth, of course."

"But can you?" said the inspector. "I'm not sure you can."

"Why ever not?" Angela was astonished.

"The property in Mortimer Square is held on long-term lease, isn't that right?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, but what has that to do with it? Why can't I charge him?"

"I don't think you can steal earth," said the inspector, "and anyway it's not your earth," and all the faces turned to look at Angela.

"Oppose her and that's the best way to make her go on" — Olivia could have told them that. "The Garden Committee's, then," said Angela more impatiently still. "Why quibble?"

"It's not even the Garden Committee's," said the inspector. "The earth belongs to the owners, whoever they are. Even if you started a private prosecution, on a charge like that you would end up in a good old legal tangle."

"Well, I can charge the boy with assaulting Lucas."

"You can't," said the inspector again. "Only Mr. Lucas can do that."

"Lucas, then," said Angela, and the inspector looked at Lucas.

"Do you wish to make a charge?"

"You heard the officer," said Angela.

"I don't want to make no trouble," murmured Lucas to his boots.

"It's sometimes one's duty to be unpleasant," said Angela. "Well, Lucas? You are acting for the Garden Committee, remember."

Lucas looked this way and that. How like a rat he is, thought Olivia. Angela was looking steadily at him, a cold glint in her eyes. At last, "I'll charge him," said Lucas. It sounded like a groan.

The inspector turned to Tip. "You're charged with assaulting Mr. Lucas at approximately six o'clock this morning, the fifth

of June, on the pavement of Mortimer Square. You needn't say anything, but if you do I shall take it down and tell it to the magistrates. Do you want to say anything?"

Tip stared at him dumbly. "No reply," said the inspector after a moment, and he wrote that down.

Then he spoke to Mr. Malone. "Will you go bail for him to appear at the Juvenile Court next Wednesday at ten o'clock? The bail is five pounds."

"But — I haven't got five pounds," said Mr. Malone in dismay. Olivia made a movement, but Angela caught her.

"That's all right," said the inspector to Mr. Malone. "You don't have to pay it if the boy appears. Now sign here, on the back of the charge sheet."

Breathing suspiciously, glaring at them all, with the pen held like some sort of dangerous weapon in his hand, Mr. Malone signed. Olivia noticed how the pen trembled. She did not like to see that little tremble. "Now you can take him home," said the inspector to Mr. Malone. "You too," he said to Sparkey.

"Can't I be charged?" said Sparkey. "Please. Please," he said frantically.

"You go along home," said the inspector.

"And I must go," said Angela and gathered up her things. "Olivia, you take Lucas home," she said as she went out, but Olivia did not hear. She was looking at Tip and Lovejoy. Mr. Malone had taken the boy by the shoulder, but Lovejoy's hand was locked in Tip's.

"Now be a good girl," said Mr. Malone. Lovejoy shook her head. He tried to prize her fingers away, but he, who really did seem as big as an ox, was unable to loosen that small hand.

"I'll stay with him," said Lovejoy.

There was a noise outside as if a henhouse full of hens had broken loose in the police station. Mr. Malone swung round, his face happy with relief, and a second later Mrs. Malone burst through the door; Olivia caught a glimpse of five other Malones outside.

"Did you see the mother as you left?" Olivia asked Angela afterward.

"I did, and a whole tribe of Malones."

"Did you speak to her?"

"No. She's a real virago and I was in a hurry. Did you?"

"Yes. She called me a dirty old Judy," said Olivia. "I liked her."

"Liked her?"

"Yes. If I had a boy I hope I should fight for him like that."

Mrs. Malone had really fought. When she had finished with Olivia, she had started on Inspector Russell.

"There's no name I wouldn't put on you," she had said. The inspector nodded to the jailer and presently he and Mr. Malone prevailed on Mrs. Malone to go. When finally she swept Tip, Mr. Malone and Sparkey out of the room, "We were left in a sudden flat silence," said Olivia.

"Who were left?" asked Angela.

"The inspector, the little girl," said Olivia, "and I."

"Lovejoy," the inspector had said, "I want to talk to you."

The extreme gentleness of his voice made Lovejoy afraid. Vincent sometimes spoke to her like that when he was deeply sorry. She looked round for Tip, but Tip had gone with his mother. His mother! Lovejoy thought and quivered.

"You're not afraid of me, are you?" said the inspector coaxingly. Lovejoy might have said, "Yes," but instead she stood glaring and breathing hard. Then she darted across the room and caught Olivia's hand.

"You stay," she croaked.

"But—" Olivia was half dismayed, half touched. She was always to remember the clutch of Lovejoy's hand.

"Stay. Stay," begged Lovejoy.

"Perhaps it would help if you would," said the inspector.

"I? Not my sister?" Olivia could not believe it.

"You, please," said Inspector Russell.

He beckoned Lovejoy to his desk. She advanced warily and stood in front of it. "He's going to make me tell about the garden," she thought and braced herself, dropping her lids, but the inspector was speaking in this same extraordinarily gentle way.

"I have to talk to you," he said, "about your mother."

CHAPTER 10



By EIGHT o'clock that evening the episode of the sparrows had been considerably overlaid in Angela's mind. For her the day had held many things: a meeting of the Child Welfare Board, a luncheon party, a lecture. Then she had changed, and had a quick dinner — quick because the Discussion Group was meeting at Number Eleven that night.

Olivia had spent most of the day alone, her mind full of the children. After dinner, her voice talking to Angela, the taste of coffee in her mouth, even her headache seemed to be outside Olivia while deep, deep in her the morning's interview was still going on:

"Lovejoy, your mother has gone away for a little longer than she thought," Inspector Russell's careful voice had said. "She forgot to give Mrs. Combie an address. I wonder if there's anything you can tell us that will help us to find her quickly."

Lovejoy said nothing.

"Does she write to you when she's away?"

"She sends post cards."

"Have you any of them?"

Lovejoy put her hand in the pocket of her coat and drew out a small wad of post cards which she gave to the inspector. "But these are two years old," he said.

"Yes," said Lovejoy and held out her hand for them.

"She hasn't written for some time?"

"No."

The inspector studied his pen. "When she was here, this time, was she any different?" he asked.

There was a pause; then, "She didn't buy me any clothes," Lovejoy said in a low voice.

"Does she usually?"

"Of course," said Lovejoy as one would say, "Clothes before bread."

"Haven't you anyone she might have gone to? An aunt or uncle?" suggested the inspector. Lovejoy shook her head.

"No friend?" He watched her narrowly. "No new friend?"

Another pause, and Lovejoy said unwillingly, "There was Uncle Francis."

"Was Uncle Francis's name" — he looked at a paper — "Colonel Baldock?"

"Yes."

"But you called him Uncle Francis?"

"Yes," said Lovejoy, breathing disdainfully.

"Do you know where Colonel Baldock stayed in London?"

"No."

There was a silence; then Lovejoy had looked up and put an end to the skillful and delicate fencing. "Has Mrs. Combie been stuck with me?" she asked.

REMEMBERING this, Olivia put down her coffee cup with such a sudden rattle that Angela looked up and frowned.

"Angela," said Olivia suddenly, "wouldn't anything make you change your mind?"

"Change my mind about what?"

"The children. Let Lucas withdraw the charge against the boy."

"The charge is right," said Angela decidedly. "Tip Malone is part of a really bad gang, Olivia, and leading the others astray. You heard what the little one said."

"The little one was boasting."

"And he gave away the truth. Olivia, don't you think people as experienced as I and that inspector — Inspector —"

"His name is Inspector Russell," said Olivia. "You should remember it."

Angela disregarded that, as Olivia had known she would. "That we know what we're doing?" finished Angela.

"I sometimes think," said Olivia, "from watching, of course, because I am not experienced, I think experience can be a — block."

"And why?" asked Angela, amused.

"Because if you think you know, you don't ask questions, or if you ask, you don't listen to the answers." Olivia had observed this often. "Everyone, *each* thing, is different, so that it isn't safe to know. You — you have to grope," she said slowly.

"That would be a nice efficient way to deal with things," said Angela. She looked up again from the notes she was making. She's not even listening to me, thought Olivia. "What is it, Ellen?" asked Angela.

"There's a Father Lambert at the door," said Ellen. "He wants to see you, Miss Angela. I think it's about those children."

"Ask him to come up, Ellen."

When Father Lambert came in, Angela asked him to sit down. "I am Miss Angela Chesney," she said distantly. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes," said Father Lambert, "about a parishioner of mine, young Tip Malone. The boy's mother came to me straight from the police. It's a terrible disgrace for her and Tip, Miss Chesney."

"She looked to me as if disgrace would not mean much to her."

"You're wrong," said Father Lambert. "I have been busy investigating since, and I think I know the whole story now."

"So do we," said Angela.

"But we don't!" Olivia burst in, "and we *must*."

"Olivia, *please*," said Angela.

"There was talk about some tools being lost," said Father Lambert after a moment.

"Stolen," said Angela.

"The children have tools," said Father Lambert, "a broken shovel from the Malones' yard and an old hand fork; the girl bought the fork at Dwight's." His face relaxed into a smile. "She bought it with money she stole from one of our candleboxes."

"So she's a thief, too," said Angela. "I'm not surprised."

"She's a redeemed thief," said Father Lambert. "Tip made her put the money back. I watched it all."

"And didn't interfere?"

"Why should I? Tip had it in hand." Angela sniffed but Father Lambert went on, "Mr. Dwight also has a pair of shears; they were sold to him by a man called Lucas."

"Lucas!" Olivia sat up in her chair.

"I don't believe it," said Angela.

"We have Mr. Dwight's statement, and that of Lucas himself when he was taxed with it."

"It's impossible," said Angela.

"I'm afraid startling things are not impossible, Miss Chesney."

"I never did like Lucas," said Olivia in a loud voice.

"Olivia, please be quiet."

"I don't know about the iris plants —" Father Lambert began.

"Lucas probably bought half and kept the money," said Olivia.

"We will deal with Lucas," said Angela angrily.

"I'm afraid you won't be allowed to, Miss Chesney. You have made this into a police case and —"

"Are you trying to blackmail me?"

"I'm not even trying to trade." Father Lambert's voice was still good-humored. "I only want —"

Angela cut across him. "What you tell me makes no difference to the boy's case. He is charged with hurting Lucas. What Lucas has done, or not done" — she's being deliberately insulting, thought Olivia — "doesn't alter that," said Angela. "It's the only way of punishing the boy for stealing our earth. That wasn't a little theft, Father Lambert. They took thirteen loads —"

"Buckets," said Olivia. "But, of course, those are child loads."

"They stole them," said Angela, ignoring Olivia.

"There are degrees of stealing," said Father Lambert. "Tip thought the earth, the actual earth, was free."

"Then why was it fenced?"

"That's what I've always wondered," said Olivia. "In the country, where there is plenty of earth, perhaps one can fence, but here, in London, where there's so little, it should be open."

"Tip knew they were trespassing," said Father Lambert after a moment, "but he did not mean to steal."

"He did not mean to steal our earth," said Angela bitingly. "But he knew he could get money for it."

"It's a fine evening after the rain," said Father Lambert. "Would you come with me? There is something I think you ought to see. Will you come?" He added, "Please."

"The case will come into court," said Angela. "Anything you want to show can be produced then."

Father Lambert smiled. "I couldn't produce this in court."

"Then I fail to see —"

"If you would only look!" For the first time he showed a hint of impatience.

"I am very busy this evening," said Angela. "In fact" — she looked at her watch — "in exactly ten minutes we have people coming here."

"You won't come?" said Father Lambert to Angela. He sounded disappointed but not disappointed as much for himself as for her. "You won't come?" — as if he were giving her another chance; then he looked directly at Olivia and said, "Will you?"

"Yes," said Olivia breathlessly.

THERE was a burr of conversation in the drawing room when Olivia came back. "You mean a buzz, surely," Angela would have said, but no, Olivia meant a burr; something hard and difficult to break into, she thought. She burst in upon it. "Oh, Angela! Something after our own hearts!" she cried.

Nobody heard her. The Discussion Group was relaxing over sandwiches and tea, which meant, as Olivia had often found, that they all talked together instead of separately.

"Angela, something after our own hearts," cried Olivia again. It had lost its force, but to Angela it sounded far too loud; then she saw it was Olivia, Olivia with her dark face flushed, her hair untidy, her coat smudged with dirt — when Father Lambert had unlocked the little, unused churchyard door they had clambered over the rubble. Olivia's eyes were lit up, shining — blazing, thought Angela. "You needn't prosecute," cried Olivia, waving her gloves. "They didn't sell our earth. They used it for a garden." And she cried, "Angela, wait till I tell you about the garden!"

"Olivia dear, we are in the middle of a meeting."

But Olivia blundered on; only the need to reach Angela seemed to her important. "A little garden almost in a church," she said, and her harsh voice was soft and full of respect. "Father Lambert watched them making it; they didn't know that he watched; it's

made in the rubble that nobody wanted, where nobody saw. It's careful and — innocent," said Olivia, pleased to find the right word. "Innocent," she repeated, her eyes on Angela.

Angela was making stabs with a small silver knife at the sandwich on her plate. Olivia, watching her, knew that a struggle was going on in Angela. She's going to give up, thought Olivia, give up her own way, give in, and she felt a surge of love for her sister; then someone gave a titter, quickly and politely suppressed, but a titter. Angela stiffened. She laid the knife down, and, "At least Olivia admits it's our earth," said Angela humorously.

"Don't joke," said Olivia. It sounded like an injunction.

"Then don't talk as if this were a miracle," snapped Angela.

"It is, in that place, out of those children."

"Nonsense, all little guttersnipes make mud pies," said Angela. "Another cup of tea, Miss Monkton?"

For a moment Olivia stood still; her heart had begun its uncomfortable bumping, but she hardly noticed it; her hand holding the gloves she had waved so triumphantly tightened so that the knuckles were white; then she went out and closed the door.

Her heart was bumping so that she had to lean against the landing paneling and close her eyes, holding her hands to her breast. In a moment she knew the pain would come, and she stayed there, shrinking from it. Then it swept over her so that she almost groaned. It's different, thought Olivia. It's worse. I wish Ellen would come, and, as it stabbed again, she did groan, "Ellen. Somebody. Please." The hall and stairs seemed to sway in as if they would fall on her; the pain went through her as she had known it presently must do, and she fainted.

"WHY wasn't I sent for before?" asked Doctor Wychcliffe. "You must have had this condition for years," he grumbled.

"By condition you mean illness, don't you?" said Olivia. "You can tell me, I'm not afraid." Nor was she, but when he had finished — Angela called him a blunt old man, but to Olivia his bluntness was truthful and not unkind — she lay still.

"I should like," she said at last, and politely as if she were speaking of some everyday thing, "I should like it if you could arrange, as

much as you can, of course, to help me to go on a little longer. I have a reason," said Olivia, and it seemed to her as if she never had one before, "a reason for not wanting to die just now."

"CAN I see Tip?"

"Holy Biddy, is that *you* again?" shouted Mrs. Malone.

"Please can I see Tip?" But Mrs. Malone blocked the door.

"You're not going to see Tip any more," she said. "Put that on your needles and knit it."

For two weeks Tip had been kept away from Lovejoy. He was guarded on his way to school and back by a posse of Malones. In the evenings Mr. Malone kept him in, and on Saturdays he was escorted to Sid, the iceman, who was under contract to bring him back; as for Sundays, he was sent to his aunt in Streatham.

Lovejoy hung about the corners, waiting. She even courted Sparkey to see if he had a message, but Sparkey's mother pounced on her and drove her away. If the Malone girls found her they set upon her. Lovejoy had a black eye from Bridget Malone. Still, she would have borne even more than that to catch a glimpse of Tip.

"Please can I see Tip?"

"I told you, no."

"Please."

"No."

Then one day Lovejoy came, desperate, to the Malones' basement door. "Please, Mrs. Malone. They're going to send me away."

It is amazing how hard people can be when they have to protect someone else. Mrs. Malone was big and warmhearted, but, "Good riddance to bad rubbish," she said and shut the door. Lovejoy gave a strangled little gulp, and fled down the Street.

WHEN Lovejoy had to appear in the Juvenile Court the magistrate had come straight to the point. "This is a very sad thing that has happened to you," he said, "but it has happened. Now we have to find someone kind and careful who will look after you."

"I can look after myself," said Lovejoy.

"Not at eleven years old," said the magistrate gently. "Tell us, is there anyone to whom you would like to go?"

"I'll stay with Mrs. Combie," said Lovejoy.

"I can't do it, sir," said Mrs. Combie. She had been sitting down in the front row. Now she came forward. "I don't mind for a little while till things are settled, but I couldn't take the responsibility," she said. "It's not that she's not a good child, sir. She is, but — well, I just couldn't."

The magistrate looked inquiringly at Miss Dolben, the Probation Officer. "Mrs. Combie has difficulties of her own at home," said Miss Dolben.

"Yes," said Mrs. Combie, breathing loudly. "Why should I take Lovejoy?" she asked. "Just because I rented the room? Why me more than anybody else?"

"I know it's not your responsibility," said the magistrate soothingly. "It's only that she had become fond of you."

"Because she doesn't want to go into a home," said Mrs. Combie.

Now, as Lovejoy stood in front of the bench, she knew there was no one.

"Miss Angela Chesney, who was concerned in the case about the boy, is on the Committee of the Home of Compassion," she heard the magistrate say. "She has told Miss Dolben she could get this child in there, and Miss Dolben thinks that a good idea — isn't that so, Miss Dolben?"

Miss Dolben came up to the table. "It wouldn't mean going right away," she said, "not for two weeks, and Lovejoy could keep on at the same school, which she likes. . . ."

So it was settled while Lovejoy stood in the middle of the court with the heads bent round her; the people were busily writing or looking at their watches — or their nails, thought Lovejoy. Then Miss Dolben and Mrs. Combie and Lovejoy went outside and Miss Dolben got some money and gave it to Mrs. Combie for Lovejoy's keep — "Pending," said Miss Dolben, and Mrs. Combie took Lovejoy away.

"WHAT'S 'pending'?" Lovejoy asked Vincent later that day in an effort to read her fate.

"Waiting till it, the thing you're waiting for, happens," said Vincent.

"Then it's going to happen?" asked Lovejoy.

"It must," said Vincent, white-faced. Lovejoy looked at him; he was not talking of her but of himself.

They had come and taken away the refrigerator, before even the first installment was paid. "Mrs. Combie asked them to," said Vincent, but he was not angry. The restaurant kept open, but Vincent did not go to Mortimer Street any longer; he bought a few things in the cheaper shops and carried them home in a netted bag. There was only one vase of flowers in the restaurant and only little meals were cooked. Now at night, when Vincent sat at his desk, his chin on his hands, Lovejoy knew what he was doing, waiting — "Pending," said Lovejoy.

She made one more attempt on Mrs. Combie. It was in the kitchen, one afternoon when Mrs. Combie was sitting at the table having one of her cups of tea; tea was the only thing that kept her alive, Mrs. Combie said. Lovejoy came and stood by her, holding the edge of the table. "I'd work for you," said Lovejoy hoarsely. "Even when I'm grown up. I'd work and give you all the money."

Mrs. Combie stirred her tea and looked firmly at the tablecloth, while a great lump came in her throat.

"Please keep me," said Lovejoy.

"We can't even keep ourselves," said Mrs. Combie incoherently and she burst into tears.

After that, the time left seemed twenty years to Lovejoy. It went quickly and yet the days were long; they seemed all daylight, dry, hot and mercilessly bright. Everything was cracking apart. "I need Tip badly," said Lovejoy. "I can't water the garden alone." Laboriously carrying water over the wall in jam jars, she was only managing to keep the pansies moist — "and Jiminy Cricket, of course, Jiminy Cricket is *first*," said Lovejoy; the mustard and cress was turning brown. Its crop was over, but Lovejoy did not know that; she thought it was the heat and the dryness, and the absence of Tip. The absence of Tip went on and on.

Twice she had a sign of him; on two Monday mornings Lovejoy found a piece of string hanging over the wall and, tied to it, an old envelope in which was half a crown. On the envelope was written, *From Tip*. Tip dropped them over on Sundays when he went to

Mass. I can do that anyhow, Tip had thought. Lovejoy did not know it but he had been fighting many battles for her.

"Mum, couldn't we have one more child?" he had asked his mother.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Malone promptly. She knew he meant Lovejoy.

"Mum, I wish you would. I'd work for her. I'd keep on with the ice and give you the half crown. When I leave school I can work all day. I'll give you every penny."

"Now listen, Tip Malone. That's not a good child, or a nice child. . . ." But Tip was deaf. He turned away from his mother and buried his head against the roller towel on the back door.

"The soles are coming clean off my feet with worry," said Mrs. Malone. "If he was seventeen or eighteen I'd say he was in love," she told Father Lambert afterward. "I can't get her out of his head."

"I wonder," said Father Lambert, "if you and his father wouldn't consider accepting the Admiral's offer?"

WHEN Tip had come up in court his case had been defended — Mrs. Malone had seen to that — and Angela, who had pressed the Admiral, as a member of the Garden Committee, into going with her, had been called as a witness. As they sat waiting outside the courtroom, the Admiral had had a chance to look at Tip. "He seems a manly, open boy," he said.

"He's a little liar," said Angela.

The Admiral did not answer. He went on studying Tip. Presently he had gone across to speak to the Malones. "Isn't there anything you would like to do?" he had asked Tip. "Learn a trade, be useful, instead of getting into trouble like this?"

"I'm goin' into the Navy," growled Tip.

"The Navy, heh?" The Admiral was pleased. He thought for a moment and then asked, "Is he a bright boy? Good at lessons?"

"They've got his school report in there," said Mrs. Malone bitterly. "There's nothing they didn't poke their noses into."

The Admiral spoke to the probation officer who had Tip's case, and after the hearing the officer spoke privately to Mr. and Mrs. Malone. "If you would like it," he said, "Admiral Sir Peter Percy-

Latham has offered to nominate your boy for the *Arethusa*, the training ship. . . .”

“BUT HE seems such a small boy, Father,” Mrs. Malone said now. “He isn’t,” said Father Lambert. “The usual age is thirteen.”

And a few days later Mrs. Malone said to Tip, “Dad’s taking you for an interview for the *Arethusa* next Friday.”

“The *Arethusa*? The *Arethusa* training ship?” For a moment Tip was quiet and rigid; then, “I’ll go,” said Tip, “if I can tell Lovejoy.”

“You’ll go?” Mrs. Malone was astonished. “Glory defend me, isn’t that what you’ve been aching and fighting for all this time? Of course you’ll go, my young gentleman,” she said.

“If you’ll let me tell Lovejoy,” said Tip.

In the end Mrs. Malone knew she was beaten. “But you’ll only see her for half an hour,” said Mrs. Malone, “and you’re to have Father Lambert with you.” As if Lovejoy were a small incarnation of the fiend she added, “And she’s to have a grownup too.”

“But I haven’t got a grownup,” said Lovejoy when Bridget Malone brought the message.

It was no good asking Mrs. Combie and Vincent anything these days; they looked at Lovejoy with strange, abstracted eyes and did not pay attention.

“Then you can’t come,” said Bridget smartly. “I’ll tell Tip.”

“I’ll come,” said Lovejoy. “I’ll get one.” It was a blind promise. She did not know how she could.

There was one grownup, just one, whom she would not mind asking, and that grownup was the ugly dark lady, Olivia, in the Square. Could I ask her? Would I dare? thought Lovejoy.

OLIVIA had been up and dressed for five days — but still finding the stairs a struggle — when Angela brought her a note addressed to Miss Olivia, Number Eleven, the Square. “Ellen says that little girl pushed it through the letter slot,” said Angela.

Olivia read the painfully written note twice and passed it to Angela.

“She’s asking you to act as a go-between,” said Angela, amused.

“Yes,” said Olivia.

"Abominable impertinence."

Olivia was so pleased that she was silent. She, Olivia, had been asked, actually asked, to join in something by a child — something very real, thought Olivia; it was to her as wonderful as when Lovejoy had put out her hand. "It seems to me a compliment," she said shakily.

"But you'll say you're not strong enough," said Angela, and with a patient sigh she said, "I suppose I could fit it in, though I have a terribly busy day. All right, I'll go."

"*You* are not asked," said Olivia.

FROM the moment she stepped into the restaurant Olivia knew something was wrong. She was looking round in surprise when a pale, thin man rose from a desk and held up his hand. "Please don't," he said. "Don't look at it."

Olivia obediently tried to detach her eyes from the snow-clean linen, the glass; to ignore the scent of flowers and fruit — there were roses in a vase, a dish of peaches. The roses are the day before yesterday's, Vincent could have told her. There are only four peaches. Still, they were something. Vincent was going down with his colors flying.

"Are you Mr. Coimbie?" Olivia asked.

"Yes." He said it so fiercely that she blushed. She was still weak and though she had come in a taxi her heart was beating painfully. She asked if she could sit down.

He looked at her and brought her a glass of wine. "You must let me pay for it," she said timidly.

"You needn't, it isn't mine," said Vincent. "The restaurant has been closed."

Mr. Dwight, from the secondhand store, had come to the restaurant two days before. He had spent hours pasting pink labels on the tables and chairs, the big plated dish cover, the hatstand, the mahogany desk, on everything; the labels had numbers printed on them. "Why?" Lovejoy had asked.

"The furniture's going to be sold," said Vincent. Lovejoy stood still while Vincent carried in the bay trees, and Mr. Dwight put labels on the tubs.

"This is the last dinner we can serve for you, sir," Vincent had said to Mr. Manley the previous night.

"Gone bust?" said Mr. Manley. "I'm not surprised. It was a good effort all the same," he said. He looked squarely at Vincent, and if Vincent had looked back he would have seen that Mr. Manley's eyes were very friendly. He had called Vincent over to him before he left. "I need an under-steward to help care for my house down in the country," he said. "If it would interest you, come and see me. I should want you to cook for me occasionally when I'm down, and there would be a place for your wife with the cleaning. Think it over," said Mr. Manley.

Vincent did not need to think it over. When Mr. Manley said "under-steward," Vincent heard only the "under."

"No, thank you," he said. "It's kind of you, sir, but I couldn't do that." And when he told Mrs. Combie about it later he said, "Imagine. *Imagine* waiting on Mr. Manley every night."

But the next day, when he mentioned the offer to Mr. Edwards, the bank manager, Mr. Edwards said, "Surely 'steward' gave you an inkling. The house is Greatorex." Mr. Edwards had no reason to think well of Vincent and he enjoyed being a little unkind.

"*Greatorex!*" said Vincent.

"Is that a big house?" asked Mrs. Combie.

"Very big," said Mr. Edwards. "A show place. Talk of beauty!" And he said to Vincent, "It's open to the public; you ought to go there one day and see what you've missed. Didn't you know he was Lord Manley? One thing to comfort you," said Mr. Edwards. "He's quite a famous gourmet. If I had known he was coming to you—"

"If I had known!" said Vincent.

IT WAS all over now, but an obstinacy in Vincent made him go on laying the tables, and when Olivia came in the restaurant looked much as it always had, though it was a little strange to find the bay trees inside.

As Olivia finished her wine, Lovejoy came down, her hair brushed, her face and hands washed. "Let's go, Miss Olivia," she said, but Vincent fidgeted round them; he had something private

to say to Olivia, something he did not want Lovejoy to hear. At last he put a little jug of parsley on the table.

"Don't you think that's good parsley?" he asked Olivia, but he did not look at the parsley, he looked at Lovejoy.

"Very good parsley," said Olivia and she put out a finger and, very gently, touched Lovejoy's cheek.

"What I admire about it is the way it keeps on," said Vincent. Now that he was not speaking about himself, his face was not strained or bitter. "It's had such stony ground but still it grows. I've grown very fond of it. It's loyal."

"It's a pity you can't keep it," said Olivia.

"The rubbish heap's no place for it," said Vincent bitterly.

"Rubbish or not," Olivia said as she was leaving, "you have made this." She looked round the restaurant openly. "You have tried, have made," she said. It was trying that was important. "You make me very ashamed," said Olivia. "I have been such a shameful coward."

She was a coward still. "Suppose Mrs. Malone is there," she said tremulously to Lovejoy as they walked to church.

But only Father Lambert was waiting and Olivia, feeling rather like the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, sat down in the chair he put for her in the vestibule. The churchyard door was open, and Lovejoy went out into the garden to meet Tip.

"I told your mother I'd not let you out of my sight," Father Lambert had said to Tip as they came. "I happen to have very long sight. Go into the garden and wait for Lovejoy."

NOTHING happens as it is planned. To begin with, it had been disconcertingly formal to walk through the church door instead of coming down the wall. Tip and Lovejoy had fought for this moment, pleaded and longed for it; now Tip came slowly across the rubble. "Hello," he said.

"Hello," said Lovejoy, and there was silence.

"I'm going to the *Arethusa*," said Tip. After all it was what he had come there to tell her. She made no comment, and, "It's a training ship for the Navy," he said.

"I hope you enjoy it," said Lovejoy distantly.

"It's proper," said Tip. "The school's like living in a ship, and we wear sailor dress."

"Sailors are fashionable this year," said Lovejoy.

That seemed to belittle them, and Tip began to boast. "Probably we'll give an exhibition," he said, "and I'll be in it. You can come and watch."

"I shan't be able to," said Lovejoy coldly. "I shall be in a Home."

"My mum says you have fun in a Home," said Tip. He meant to cheer her up but it sounded quite heartless. "You go to school, like the others, and have nice frocks. They give you ice cream." Lovejoy's lip quivered but she lifted her chin and looked silently through the window at the statue. Tip wished she would talk.

"You got the money for the pansies?" asked Tip. He knew there was trouble coming by that quivering lip.

"What's the good of pansies," said Lovejoy tensely, "if you can't water them?"

"It was your fault I couldn't come," said Tip, flaring up. "It was you who got me caught. You left me. You ran away."

"I *didn't run away!* It was the *garden*."

"Garden! Garden! All you think about's that blasted garden."

"Look, the grass has all gone brown," said Lovejoy.

"Tisn't grass, it's mustard and cress," said Tip cruelly. He wanted to be cruel.

"You're not to tell her," Father Lambert had said. "She should be gone before it happens. Now promise." Tip had promised and swelled protectively, but now Lovejoy seemed to him like a little octopus, threatening to wind round him again with her tears; just as he had wanted to punish her for taking the candle money, he wanted to punish her now, hurt her, thought Tip furiously; the fuss of these weeks, the being guarded and kept in, seemed clinched in this. "It's no use your bothering about the garden," he said. "There won't be any garden soon. Get that into your nut. No garden."

The tears stopped as if a hand had seized Lovejoy and wrung her dry. "Why not?" she asked in a frightened voice.

"Because they've got the money to build the church," said Tip. "The Jiminy Cricket people gave it to them."

"Charles and Liz?" said Lovejoy, dazed. "Who told you?"

"Father Lambert." Tip was wound up, and the hideous words went on. "They'll bring a bulldozer. It'll go over the garden, like that." He made a flat sweep with his hand. "Over Jiminy Cricket, and the pansies and the pillar and the pot!"

"The pansies and the pillar and the pot," whispered Lovejoy after him. She did not mention Jiminy Cricket.

"Yes. A lot of good it's been, all that sweat," said Tip.

Lovejoy turned her back on him. She had decided she would not, ever again, cry in front of Tip, but to suppress the crying hurt unbearably. Movements, small hard shudders, shook her. Above her, looking down through the window, was the statue; the windows were open wide, but a pane of glass caught the bitter shudders from Lovejoy so that they seemed to pass from her into the statue.

Then, "Bloody pigs," said Lovejoy.

"Who?" asked Tip, startled.

"Grownups, all grownups!" cried Lovejoy and she picked up a piece of stone — a big piece, thought Tip, horrified — and threw it through the window. The stone hit the statue full on the breast. For a moment it rocked as if it were mortally hurt, then, in front of their eyes, it slowly overbalanced from the pedestal and fell. There was a crash as it hit the floor.

CHAPTER 11



"I'LL TAKE you round the house," Sister Agnes said to Angela and Lovejoy. In her black habit with a narrow white starched coif and veil, she was just a nun to Lovejoy.

"This is the dining room." Lovejoy stared at the blue and white oilcloth-covered tables, the red beakers, the small chairs.

"The playroom." A doll's house, a rocking horse, toys . . .

"The playground."

"Don't we play in the street?" Lovejoy asked.

"Of course not," said Angela, and, "Our children are not allowed in the street," said Sister Agnes gently.

Lovejoy was too polite to say what she thought.

"This will be your bedroom," said Sister Agnes.

Small beds, with white covers, a locker by each bed, more toys, dolls and teddy bears on the pillows. "Delightfully friendly," said Angela, "and only five beds. In some homes," she told Lovejoy, "you sleep in a dormitory."

"But I've always had a room to myself."

If Lovejoy had been asked how she was behaving she would have said she was being good and sensible; she did not know that to Angela it seemed she had fought all the way — "About the clothes, for instance," said Angela. One of Angela's committees had given the money for the clothes.

"Are these for me?" Lovejoy had asked Miss Dolben, the Probation Officer, when Miss Dolben had fitted her out.

"Your very own," said Miss Dolben. She was well used to the vanity of girls, the difficulty of buying clothes for them, but she had never seen anything like this silent disdain.

"The raincoat, the gym dress, the flannel blouses, the walking shoes? And that brown — frock?" Lovejoy could not bring herself to call it a dress.

"Your very own."

It was only two days later that Miss Dolben had brought Lovejoy into Angela's office. "Do you know what she has done?" Even good quiet-tempered Miss Dolben was indignant. "Do you *know* what she has done? Sold her clothes," cried Miss Dolben.

"Sold them! Where? Why? To whom?" Angela's voice was shrill. Olivia, who had seen Miss Dolben and Lovejoy come in and had stolen downstairs, was shamelessly eavesdropping.

"To Mr. Dwight," said Lovejoy in surprise. Where else?

"For three pounds fifteen!" moaned Miss Dolben. "The raincoat alone cost four pounds."

"Then it was cheating," said Lovejoy sharply. "That raincoat was very badly cut."

"Be quiet," said Angela even more sharply, but the next moment she asked, "What did you do with the money?"

"Bought clothes," said Lovejoy with dignity.

Olivia had no business to interfere, but now she was moved to come down the last few stairs and ask, "What did you buy?"

Lovejoy's face lit up. "A little box coat like a reefer," she said to Olivia, "not a real reefer, but quite good cloth and lining. Then a navy cotton skirt; it's on a bodice and the buttons will let down. And two of those American woven shirts, one is white and one white with navy stripes. And these plain pumps," said Lovejoy, showing them. "They'll do for winter if I'm careful about puddles."

Angela had taken the clothes away. "I must," she said when Olivia protested. "Even if we buy everything twice, that spirit must be broken." She had given the money again, out of her own pocket, and the raincoat, the gym dress, the flannel blouses, walking shoes and brown frock had been bought back that very day.

"You must learn to do as you're told," Angela had told Lovejoy. "You're far too cocksure and independent."

But after Lovejoy and Miss Dolben had left, Olivia had hesitated, and then dared to say, "Angela, I should so much like to do something for that little girl. Couldn't I be her guardian? Some sort of guardian?" She stopped again, blushed darkly, then said with a defiant rush, "Angela, I want to adopt that little girl."

"What did you say?" Angela was so amazed that she gaped. "After all she's done!" said Angela.

"Because of all she's done." Olivia blushed more painfully still, but she persisted. "Why not, Angela?"

"Poor Olivia. She'd make rings round you."

"Well, why not?"

"They don't let old maids adopt children, for one thing," said Angela cuttingly. "Oh, Olivia, why are you so exasperating?"

"I know it wouldn't be easy but I'm sure Ellen would help me," said Olivia earnestly. "We would take all responsibility."

"Which means I should have to take it in the end," said Angela, and Olivia knew she could not contradict her; for that one brief moment she had forgotten what Doctor Wychcliffe had said.

ACTUALLY, of course, Angela had taken what responsibility there was. Because she had recommended her, she had brought Lovejoy

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ACTUALLY, of course, Angela had taken what responsibility there was. Because she had recommended her, she had brought Lovejoy

to the home herself, instead of letting Miss Dolben do so. Now before leaving Lovejoy with Sister Agnes she said, "You should be grateful and not criticize. Children like you have nothing except what kind people choose to give them. Nothing at all."

Sister Agnes had made a quick movement then, and when Angela had gone she took Lovejoy by the hand. "I want to show you something," she said, opening the door of a room off the entrance hall, a room Lovejoy had not seen before.

"This is our chapel," said Sister Agnes. "If ever you find things difficult and don't feel very happy, you can come in here."

She had expected Lovejoy would find the chapel strange, even bewildering, but Lovejoy walked past her as if it were familiar, then stood as if she had been struck still. "Hello!" It was a greeting, not an exclamation. On her papers had been written *Sunday school, church, nil*, but she slid into a pew and knelt down before a statue of the Virgin.

After a moment Sister Agnes came and sat beside her.

"She was in a church I knew," whispered Lovejoy.

"The statue?"

Lovejoy nodded, her breath held.

Since she had broken the statue in Father Lambert's church she had felt hidden in sorrow, and now the statue was here again with the sky-blue robes, the gilt plate on the back of her head. Sister Agnes did not know the story of the smashing, and so she could not fathom the import of Lovejoy's words. "The statue, the very same!" breathed Lovejoy.

"Not the very same. Another like it," the Sister corrected. "That statue must have been made in hundreds — thousands, I expect. If you saw it somewhere else it was another one." Her brisk voice was intended to shatter all untruths, but Lovejoy continued to gaze. Then Sister Agnes distinctly heard her whisper, "Hail Mary."

"We don't teach you to pray to Mary," said the Sister gently. "And we don't cross ourselves."

I do, said Lovejoy silently. She did not know the difference between Anglican and Roman Catholic. She wondered why there were not candles, she missed their warmth, and the live sounds of the clicking beads, the pattering prayers.

"You can honor Mary as the mother of Our Lord but you must not give her supernatural powers," said Sister Agnes.

Tip taught me and I'll do what Tip taught me for ever and ever, said Lovejoy silently. A wave of such homesickness came over her for the church, the Street, the garden, Jiminy Cricket, the Combies, that she could not speak.

Yesterday, in the restaurant, Mrs. Combie had served ham and peaches and ice cream for midday dinner. "Well, really, Ettie!" Cassie had said.

"It's Lovejoy's last day."

"It's she who ought to be giving them to you," said Cassie. "Do you know your mother owes Mrs. Combie thirty pounds?" Then Cassie had looked at Mr. Dwight's labels. "Our Dad's furniture," she said with a little sob, and turned to where Vincent sat. "I'd give my soul if Ettie had never seen you," said Cassie.

Mrs. Combie sat up. "Nonsense, Cassie," she said. It was the first time Lovejoy had ever heard her say "Nonsense" to anyone. "A man like Vincent, with all he does, must be expected to fail now and then. *Next time*—" said Mrs. Combie.

"You think there'll be a next time?" asked Cassie jeeringly.

"There will be a next time — for Lovejoy too," said Mrs. Combie. "You'll be hearing from us, Cassie."

When Cassie had gone Vincent got up from the table. He went into the pantry and presently came back, carrying a plate. He took it to the sink and washed the label off and polished it carefully; then he put a helping of ice cream on it, and set it in front of Mrs. Combie. It was an Angelica Kauffman plate.

Mrs. Combie had put her head down on the table and cried.

Now, BLINKING back the tears, Lovejoy thought it better not to think about Vincent and Mrs. Combie and Jiminy Cricket. I meant to bring Jiminy Cricket, she thought. He's probably dying with no one to water him.

She shut her eyes. She had meant to bring Jiminy Cricket but — I broke the statue to bits, thought Lovejoy, and I couldn't go back into the church. "I didn't mean it," she said, still hearing the crash. "If I didn't mean it, then it shouldn't count," she argued, but it

counted and she had felt muffled in sorrow and grief, and now the statue was here again.

"No supernatural powers," Sister Agnes was saying firmly. Lovejoy dropped her lids.

Outside a bell clanged, and Sister Agnes got up. "Wait here a moment," she said. Presently Lovejoy heard a sound like school, the sound of children's feet marching. She leaned her head against the pew rail and shut her eyes. Even her sharp little brain could see no way out of this. The feet were coming nearer, the din of voices; then there was a clap of hands and complete obedient silence. Steps came toward the chapel — to fetch me, thought Lovejoy in a panic. In a moment someone would say, "Come along."

All the things said to children rose in her mind. "Do as you're told." "Don't answer back." "Come along." "Be quiet." Lovejoy ground her teeth. Quiet, obedient, grateful. All the detestable things children should be, and all the lovely free things, thought Lovejoy, that they must not, opinionated, cocky — she hadn't Angela's word "cocksure." Cocky, thought Lovejoy longingly.

The door opened. "Come along," said Sister Agnes, but Lovejoy was praying.

"Hail Mary," prayed Lovejoy between her teeth, "Mary, make me cocky and independent."

SPARKEY sat on his folded newspaper and looked down the Street. The October wind was chilly and in it was a tang of wood smoke; Sparkey knew where that came from; Lucas, reinstated, had been burning leaves in the Square Gardens.

Suddenly Sparkey sat up on his step. A green car, *the* green car, had turned into Catford Street. It drove slowly as if looking for something, then stopped where Vincent's restaurant used to be. Sparkey jumped to his feet and ran down the Street.

"Where are you going?" called his mother.

"Hist!" said Sparkey over his shoulder.

Charles — Sparkey had heard Lovejoy say the names — was out of the car, standing and looking; after a moment Liz got out as well. They were looking at the restaurant. What's the good of that? thought Sparkey. It's shut.

After a moment Charles and Liz got back into the car, which turned and drove up to the church. Sparkey ran back and was on the pavement when Charles opened the car door and got out. "But it's gone," said Liz, looking where the church had been.

Charles laughed. "Didn't you expect it to be gone?"

Hut, steps, walls, bell, airplane notice had been swept away, and in their place was a big empty pit; where the rubble and marble had been was space. Sparkey came closer. "There were bodies here," he whispered. "They found them when they cleared away the church. They dug them up."

"Cut along," said Charles sharply to Sparkey.

"They put them all in a hole and sealed them up," said Sparkey.

"Go away, you little ghoul," said Charles.

He laughed, but Sparkey was sure he had frightened Liz.

"It's life stamped out," she said, looking round the empty pit. "Our restaurant, the funny church, and I wanted to see my little saint." She sounded almost as if she were crying.

"You're hungry," said Charles. "You'll feel better when you have had some dinner, even if it's not our little man's."

"I don't want any dinner," said Liz. Then, "Look," said Charles.

He turned her to the old back wall; on a bit of brick was a tiny spurt of copper-pink and green. It was so small that it was easy to overlook it but it was there, on its piece of brick, a plant in a strange round pot. "It's — is it?" said Liz. "But — *how* can it be?" she cried. Charles went across and brought it to her, trying to dust the pot with his handkerchief. "You'll dirty your gloves," he told Liz, but she took it from him.

"What was it she called it?" she asked Charles.

"Jiminy Cricket," said Sparkey obligingly.

"That was it, Jiminy Cricket," said Charles. He looked at Sparkey. "It seems to be a famous rose."

"But how can it be Jiminy Cricket?" asked Liz.

"It must be," said Charles. "It isn't likely there would be another rose like that in Catford Street."

"It's blooming," said Liz. "Someone must have watered it." The tiny leaves were dusty but they were green, and on the little tree were two roses and a bud, a deep pink bud.

As they looked at it, the builder's watchman came out of his hut. "A boy comes in and waters it," he said. "He must have put it up there, on the wall."

"A boy? Not a little girl?" asked Liz.

"I think it was a boy," said the watchman. "Of course, it may have been a girl. There are hundreds of girls. I spend my life chasing kids out of here." And he glowered at Sparkey.

"Hundreds of little girls," said Liz. "Little churches, little restaurants. What does it matter what happens to one?"

"Don't be impertinent," said Charles and he took her arm and shook her gently. "Look at Jiminy Cricket and what he has come through. Perhaps Vincent's the new headwaiter at the Savoy; perhaps he has won a football pool and opened a better restaurant somewhere else. As for the little girl," said Charles, "no one, nobody has the faintest idea what that little girl will do."

OLIVIA had died in August. It was very inconvenient; everyone was away, the Miss Chesneys themselves should have been in Scotland, and their brother, Noel, had to interrupt his holiday. And it had meant a great deal of work for Ellen.

"I didn't mind," Ellen said afterward. "She died so happy." But Olivia's face when she died had not looked happy as much as satisfied.

Not much more than a month before, she had gone to see Mr. Anstruther, the Chesneys' young lawyer. "Mr. Anstruther," Olivia had said, "you are young, but I'm sure you have some sense. Please will you tell me? Do you think I'm in my right mind?"

"My dear Miss Chesney!"

"I am asking you," said Olivia, "because presently Angela will tell you I'm not. You may have trouble so I should like you to telephone my doctor, Dr. Wychcliffe, who will tell you that, though I'm not very well, I'm perfectly sane."

"I don't need to telephone Dr. Wychcliffe," said Mr. Anstruther.

"But please do it." Olivia spoke firmly but the hand that smoothed her gloves had trembled. "You see, I want to alter my will, alter it in rather a drastic way." She smiled. "When you have telephoned the doctor I should like you to draw up a draft."

"I drew it up, there and then," said Mr. Anstruther to Noel and Angela.

"I haven't so very much to leave," Olivia had said, "but I think it will be enough — enough for what I want," she had added, seeing Mr. Anstruther's inquiring look. "Noel and Angela think I should leave it to Noel's children. Well, they must be disappointed. The annuity to Ellen is to stand, of course, but the rest . . ."

When, after Olivia's funeral, Mr. Anstruther had finished reading the will to Noel and Angela, there was such a dazed silence that he said, "Perhaps I had better explain it to you in nonlegal terms."

Olivia had apologized for the will herself. "It seems a roundabout way of doing it," she had told Mr. Anstruther, "but it was difficult to find a way that would fulfill all requirements. *All* requirements," she had said. "If I leave all to Lovejoy, she would be separated from Tip, and that little girl needs *not* to be separated. She needs a home, and the home she wants is with Vincent and Mrs. Combie."

"A trust is to be set up," Mr. Anstruther began, "to open a restaurant in the West End to be managed by this man Vincent —"

"But Olivia knew nothing about the man!" Angela protested.

"Once, in his restaurant, I talked to him about parsley," Olivia would have said if she had been there to say it. "That told me all I needed to know."

Now Mr. Anstruther went on. "The restaurant is to be managed by this man Vincent, Mr. Combie, on condition that he and his wife provide a home for Lovejoy Mason, treating her, in all respects, as if she were their own child. If the restaurant seems profitable, Vincent is to be given a half share after five years; the other half is to be divided between the boy Tip Malone and Lovejoy Mason. Mrs. Combie, the wife, is to be paid three pounds a week by the Trustees for the care of Lovejoy, who is to have thirty pounds a year paid to her personally for her clothes. When Lovejoy is eighteen, or when she marries, she is to have two hundred pounds for a training or toward furnishing a home.

"Tip Malone is to visit Lovejoy when he and she like, or when his mother will let him. The Trustees are Inspector Russell of Mortimer Street Police Station" — "that nice inspector," Olivia had called him — "the man Vincent, Father Lambert of the Church

of our Lady of Sion in Catford Street, and you, Miss Angela, if they will serve on the trust with you."

"And if not?" asked Noel hotly.

"Then the Trustees are Inspector Russell, Vincent and Father Lambert."

Olivia could not have foreseen that the words would sound quite as blunt and hard as they did — they had an effect she would never have believed, for Angela began to blush. It was a blush as painful and humiliating as any of Olivia's own.

THE ADMIRAL was showing a new member of the Garden Committee round the Gardens. "We'll have some wallflowers here," he said, pointing with his stick at the long borders.

"No, sir," said Lucas.

"What do you mean, 'No, sir'?"

"Miss Chesney asked the Committee to remember the residents don't like wallflowers, sir."

The Admiral did not regain his temper until they came to the shrub beds. "This is where the trouble was," he said.

"What trouble, Admiral?" asked the new member.

"Street children," said the Admiral with a quelling look at Lucas. "You'd never think they stole loads of earth from there, would you? The funny thing is that the holes are closing up; we didn't do anything, they're closing themselves, making new earth. Don't ask me how," said the Admiral, "because I don't know."



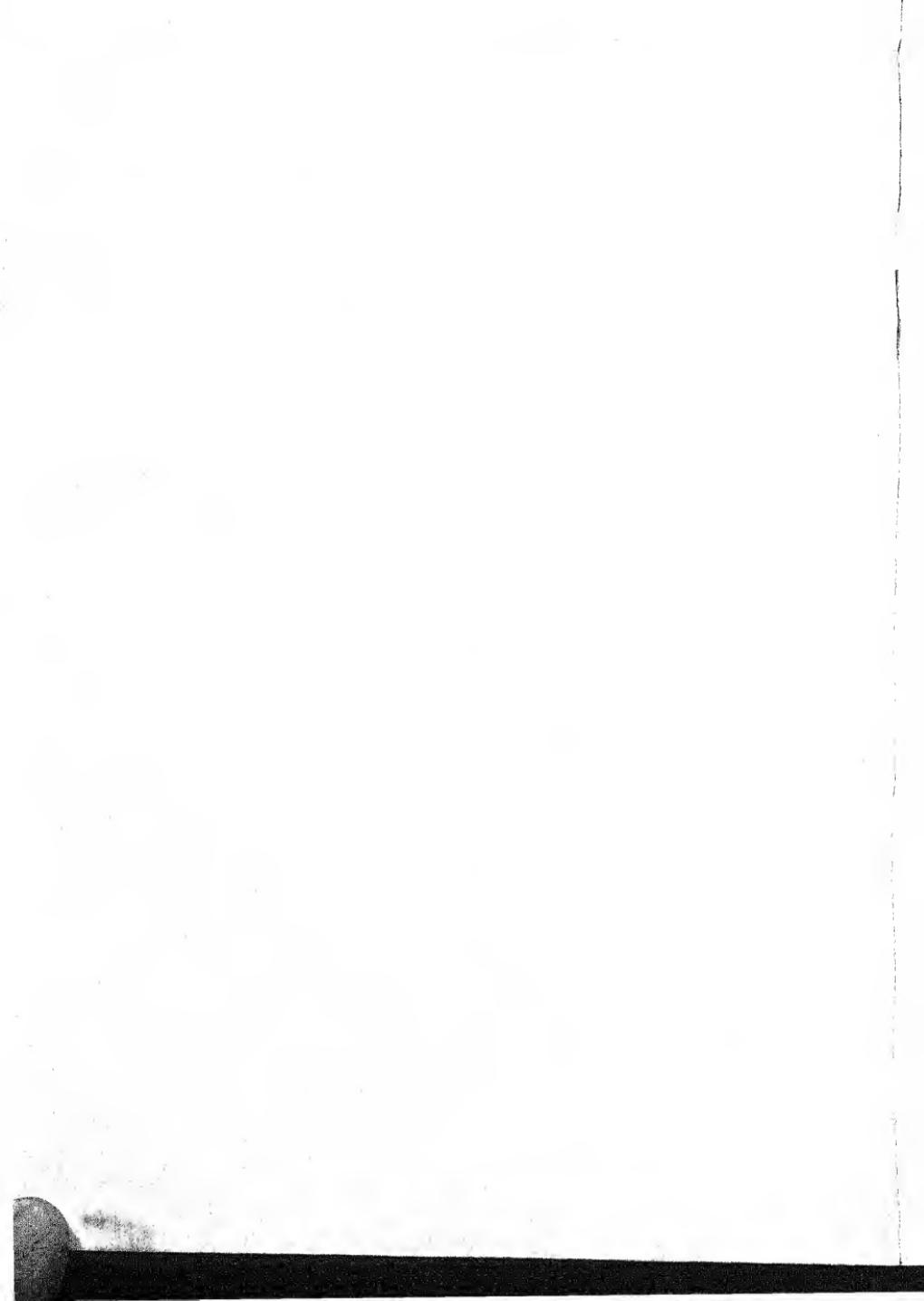
Rumer Godden



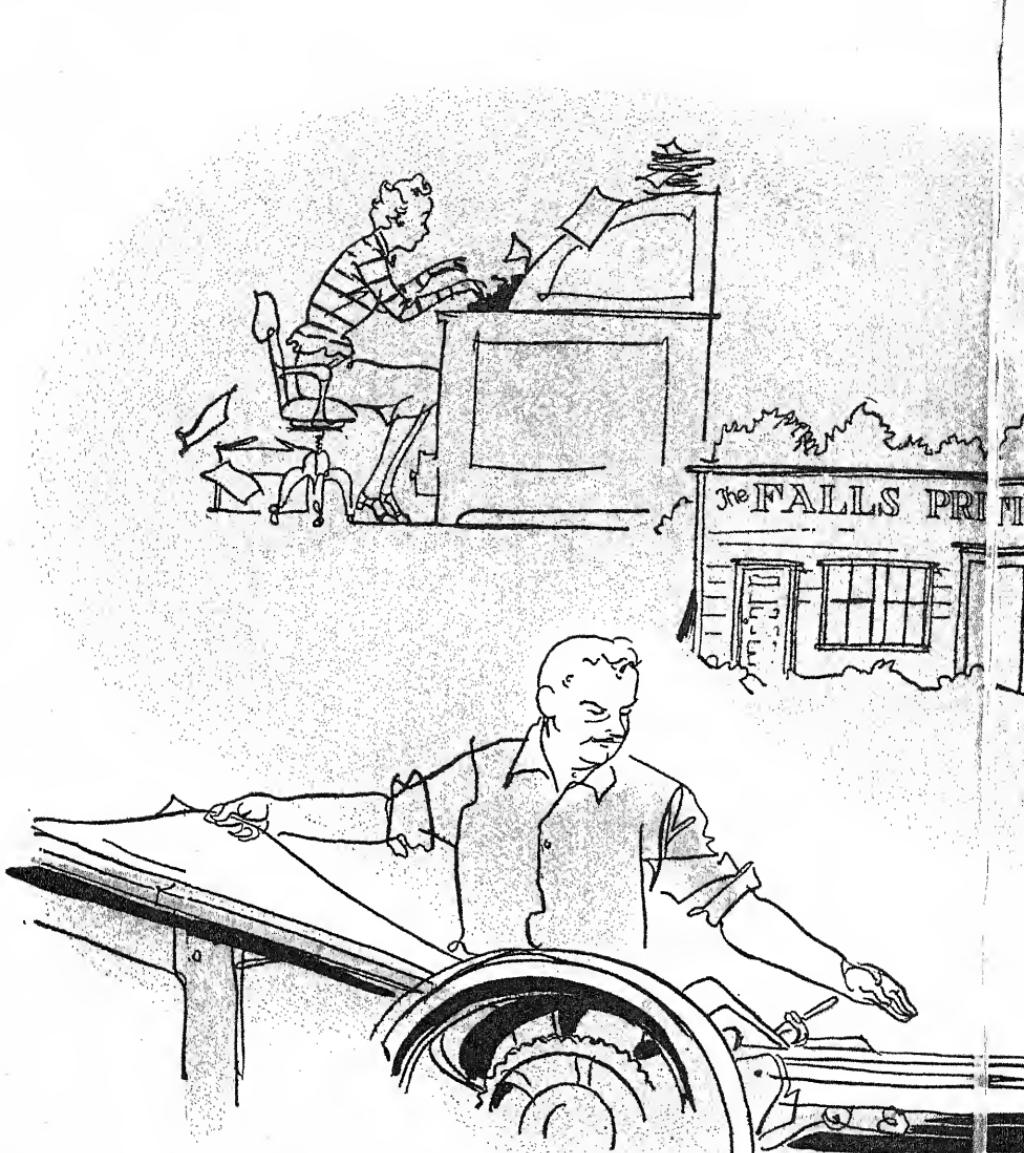
RUMER GODDEN is generally regarded as one of England's most distinguished writers. She was born in Sussex, England, but has lived half her life in India, a country which has served as background for many of her books, notably *The River* and *Kingfishers Catch Fire*.

She now lives with her husband (in private life she is Mrs. J. L. Haynes-Dixon) and their two daughters in a seventeenth-century cottage among the cherry orchards of Buckinghamshire, where she grows roses and breeds Pekingese. Her other interests, which are shared by the family, include the ballet, herbs, Victorian dolls' houses, and comparative religion with emphasis on Hindu philosophy.

It would seem that the gift for writing is hereditary, or contagious, or possibly both (Miss Godden herself began at the age of five) — for she says, "All the family write persistently and continuously, books, plays, poems, scripts and reviews. Fortunately, the house has a great many wastepaper baskets."



MINDING
OUR OWN BUSINESS



Illustrations by Dorothea Warren Fox

Minding Our Own Business

A condensation of the book by

CHARLOTTE PAUL

"Minding Our Own Business," © copyright 1955 by Charlotte Paul Groschell, is published at \$3.95 by Random House, Inc., 457 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

HEN Charlotte Paul and her husband gave up their comfortable life in Chicago to buy the little weekly newspaper in Snoqualmie, Washington, they had no premonition of the troubles — and the joys — in store for them and their two young sons.

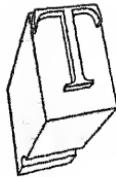
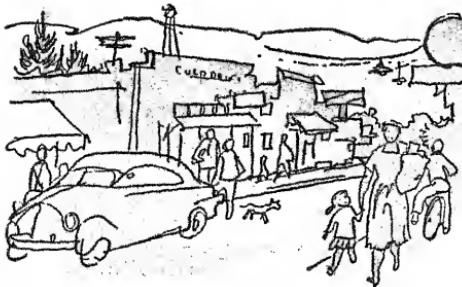
Here is the lively and courageous story of their first five years as country editors and printers. Their trials run from ancient equipment and not enough money to eccentric reporters and irate subscribers. Their triumphs lie in a discovery of loyalty and neighborliness, and a sense of steady achievement. Above all, this is the story of the good life made for itself by one family, all working together in "a business of our own."

"You'll want to laugh and worry and exult along with Charlotte, Ed and the two boys."

— Helen Beals in

The Boston Sunday Herald

"There is a warmth and humanness about it which is rare." — *San Francisco News*



THE LITTLE newspaper office in Snoqualmie, Washington, on a rainy afternoon five years ago was the scene of such earnest endeavor as to remain forever among my memories of moments that weren't funny at the time. The fact that it was rainy is hardly worth mentioning. The Snoqualmie Valley receives an annual drenching of fifty-five to sixty inches. Rain makes the trees grow big and keeps the pastures green, and is therefore an economic blessing. My disloyal objection to it on that particular afternoon was based on the fact that most of it was coming through the roof.

The staff we had recently inherited was with us in the shop: Hermia, our assistant editor, who was also the wife of the superintendent of schools, was frowning over a news item one of our country correspondents had scrawled on the back of an envelope. In the back shop, which was illuminated by one dirty window and one naked electric light bulb, was Mr. Jenkins, the printer, a man of seventy, to whom the years had given skill and ill humor in equally large quantities; somewhere along the line Mr. Jenkins' disposition seemed to have fallen into the press. Chet, an eighteen-year-old boy whose heart was in Boy Scout work, was running the big newspaper press and simultaneously reading the Scoutmaster's manual he had propped up on the feedboard. And there was Olga, the Linotype operator, a smiling, middle-aged woman with gray streaks in her hair, wearing a housedress under a pretty flowered apron and look-

ing for all the world as if she were about to mix up a batch of cookies; and Ort, the young advertising manager and one-man circulation and mailing department. Then there were our two sons, Hi and Johnny, five and four years old, respectively. They were at the shop because there was no one at home to take care of them. Last and least, there were Ed and I, the new owners, editors and publishers, keepers of the mortgage and the public trust. Between the two of us, we had a quarter of a century of experience on big-city newspapers. And between us we didn't know half as much about a country weekly as our teen-age pressman or our crotchety printer. So Ed was wrapping packages on the job-printing table, and I was running from one hole in the ceiling to the next, emptying the coffee cans into which the rain was spilling.

I poured the twenty-seventh can of rain down the sink and Ed looked up from tying his twenty-seventh bundle just as the front-office door opened. It was a customer carrying two big boxes of printing we had delivered to him only the day before. "I asked for stamped envelopes," he complained. "These are plain."

Ed looked woefully from the good customer to the bad job. Here were two thousand envelopes, useless to anyone but the man whose name we had printed on them. Inspiration struck. "Could you use them if we put stamps on them?"

"Sure. But I've got to have them by tonight."

"We'll stamp them right away," was the majestic reply.

But seven out of nine of us were busy. Our eyes fell on the two unemployed little preschool freshets to feed the *Snoqualmie Valley Record's* labor pool. Their heads were bent over coloring books. In a voice too cheerful and too loud, Ed said, "Well, boys, I've got a job for you. . . ."

We set them up in business, side by side at the old roll-top desk. Each little boy received one thousand envelopes, one thousand three-cent stamps and a tall glass of water. No coloring book had ever held their interest so completely. An hour later we heard Johnny whisper, "Hi, do you like newspaper work?"

Five-year-old Hi nodded emphatically. "Except for the taste," he whispered back.

A new generation of publishers had been launched on a sea of

ink. Ed and I looked at each other. I had a silly lump in my throat. "Did you imagine it would be like this when we decided to go into business for ourselves?"

Ed grinned. "I never realized, until now, that 'ourselves' would mean all four of us, not just you and me."

It was true. Whatever we had got ourselves into, we were all in it together. We had gone back, in a sense, to the family farm, where everyone at the dinner table had some part in providing the food he ate. For us there would never be casual acceptance of Daddy's pay check. We would all know where our food and clothing came from because we would be earning it together. Together. That is the word that brought laughter through tears for five of the hardest and best years of our lives.

WHY WOULD two people with good jobs, congenial friends and a home they loved suddenly abandon all these, move twenty-two hundred miles and go into business for themselves? On the first of August, 1949, we were comfortably situated on a small farm outside of Chicago and we expected to be there for the rest of our lives. The farm had contributed mightily to the success of our marriage. We never got bored with each other; there was always too much work to do. We seldom argued; somehow it's hard for two people hoeing corn, or on their knees weeding onions, to think of a clever retort.

When Hiram arrived, in 1944, and Johnny, in 1945, I found that five and a half acres and lots of animals were a pretty good formula for child rearing, too.

I cherish the memory of my husky little first-born, dressed in nothing but a diaper, going through two fences and across a pasture to pay a visit to a neighbor. The back end of an eighteen-months-old boy crawling under a fence is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Ed had a full schedule, commuting between his newspaper job in Chicago and home. Children, farm work and free-lance writing kept me more than busy. Our children have always known that "Daddy works and Mama writes." They were soothed to sleep by the click of typewriters and teethed on rejected manuscripts, but

there was a great deal of hugging and kissing involved. We got out of all this what we put into it — a lot!

Looking back, I can see that our farm was a good training ground for a pair about to tackle private enterprise with very little private capital. In a way we had already been in business for ourselves when we sold poultry, eggs, sweet corn and strawberries.

Ed was always giving our produce away. But when our first big strawberry crop came in, he resolved to change. We had worked in the berry patch until our backs ached and our knees were raw. "I won't let my wife work like a slave," said the new, businesslike Ed, "for less than twenty-five cents a quart." That price, advertised on a sign we hung over our mailbox, brought in customers faster than we could pick. Ed was congratulating himself when a sedan pulled up and the well-dressed couple inside asked for two quarts of strawberries. The overflowing boxes were well settled on the back seat when the woman exclaimed, "Oh my goodness, I left my money in my other purse. I only have thirty-eight cents!"

Ed waved grandly. "That's all right. Take the berries."

"We'll stop in with the twelve cents next time we come by."

"Think nothing of it," Ed boomed heartily.

For a week I teased my hardheaded businessman on the subject of letting his wife work like a slave for nineteen cents a quart.

"They'll come back," said Ed.

"Ha!" said I.

The next Sunday afternoon they did. With them, the twelve cents. Ed was vindicated. He was so overjoyed that he insisted the couple stay for a nice, big Sunday dinner.

"I *knew* they were honest," Ed whispered gleefully, as I busied myself preparing some four dollars' worth of provisions.

AFTER FIVE and a half years of marriage, Ed and I had paid off our debts. Barns, house, garage had been remodeled and we had two cars. We had security.

And then Ed left his top-spot newspaper job and went to work for the public-relations department of one of the largest corporations in the world. It was an easy job and a pleasant one. Ed bought a dozen new white shirts and put on ten pounds. But after a year

and a half he realized that an easy, well-paid job was not automatically satisfying. The present was far from invigorating and the future seemed uninspiring. We had daydreamed often of going into business for ourselves. Now Ed was forty-two and I was thirty-three. Was it too late to change?

We sat down in our living room and talked it over. It was the first of August, and a hot, still day. We could hear the boys playing in the apple orchard. The hens clucked sleepily in the yard behind the house. Through the window we watched the sprinkler spraying a glistening circle on the green lawn. It was peaceful. We loved every bit of it. But we talked of leaving it.

"I've got a good job," Ed said. "It assures me of a salary, an expense account, insurance, eventually a retirement pension."

"But you don't really like it."

"Many men spend their lives on jobs they dislike far more."

"Because they're afraid to let go."

The quick and easy answer to Ed's problem was to go back to work for a newspaper — someone else's. But as we talked, that summer evening, we agreed that we'd risk everything; we'd go into business for ourselves. "Security," we had learned at last, is simply what you carry around in your head, and the heart you put into using it. Well, what were we waiting for? It didn't take us five minutes to decide what our small business would be: a newspaper.

"Our own newspaper!" I breathed. "We could be our own bosses. Work when we want, go fishing whenever we like. . . ."

We knew that no daily paper would be small enough for our pocketbook, which contained \$23,000 in savings, stocks and the value of the farm. We should be able to make a down payment on a weekly, though; and as long as we were making the leap, we might as well hurtle into the kind of spot we'd always wanted to live in. That meant the Pacific Northwest, where I had been born and bred, and where we knew that the climate is mild, fishing is good and you can play golf all year round.

Ed stood up, stretched, and grinned at me. My return grin was from the heart.

We might be foolhardy. The bright light of our courage might be like the last brilliant glow of the bulb just before it burns out.

But we decided, that day, to crawl out of the rut while we were still silly enough to think we could, and we felt wonderful about it.

ED'S TWO-WEEK vacation began September first. That was the time it took us to make a round trip to the State of Washington and, with the help of "Pa" Kennedy of the Washington Newspaper Publishers' Association, to pluck the *Snoqualmie Valley Record* like a needle from a haystack out of a territory of thousands of square miles. Snoqualmie was on Pa's "cows and chickens" list. "Cows and chickens," he said. "They got them in the area that paper covers. Nothing more solid than cows and chickens."

That was our first reason for looking at the Snoqualmie newspaper. And then the Snoqualmie Valley was beautiful — that was our second reason. It lies thirty miles east of Seattle, at the foot of the Cascade mountains, and the ice-cold Snoqualmie River flows through its green meadows. In the communities along the river, and in the forested hills above, there lived some eighteen hundred subscribers, many of whom had been reading the paper for twenty-five years. It was a valley with a view, no matter which way you looked. Trees, lakes, rolling pastures, fish in every stream and an eighteen-hole golf course. All ours, for \$30,000.

Snoqualmie was bathed in sunlight the Sunday afternoon we drove out to see it. Seven hundred and fifty-two population, the signs announced, but that didn't include the dogs, who were catching up on their sleep in the middle of the street. The main business section occupied four blocks paralleling the railroad tracks. In a little park between the street and the tracks was a beautifully carved and painted totem pole.

On a cross street, near the Snoqualmie River, was a smaller "business section." On one corner, the bank, with rose bushes six feet tall leaning against its windows. On another, a general store with a hitching ring still firm in the streetside wall, and next door, the post office. On the third corner was the Falls Printing Company, home of the *Snoqualmie Valley Record*. Its door was wide open because the publisher was at work inside.

"S'funny thing," Ed said. "Working on a Sunday afternoon."

Dale Krebs, the owner of the *Record*, was a good Linotype opera-

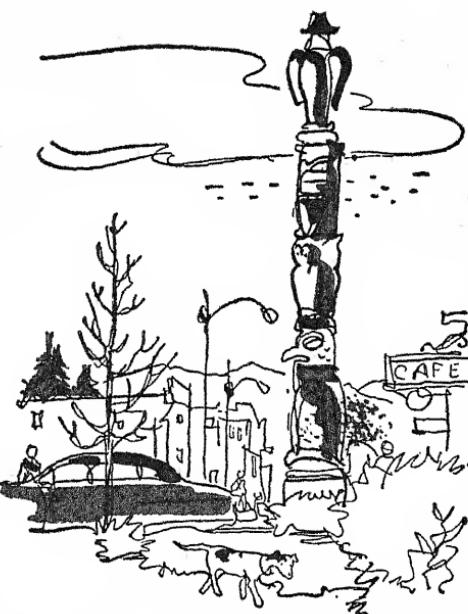
tor, a good printer and an old hand at the weekly-newspaper game — all the things we weren't; yet he told us frankly that he wanted to sell out because he and his wife were just exhausted. We hardly listened. We asked what questions our big-city minds could think up, and squinted thoughtfully at machinery we knew nothing about. The towns in the Snoqualmie Valley were small and quiet and sunny. The newspaper was interesting and the building quaint. We wanted it, all of it, and, by telegraph, we borrowed \$5000 for earnest money from an old friend. The entire down payment would be \$8700.

Sunday we saw the *Record* for the first time. Monday we announced that "after thoughtful consideration" we had decided to buy the paper. Tuesday we signed contracts. From the lawyer's office we turned east and drove back to Chicago. We were already well on our way to being small businessmen. We were in debt.

In the next two weeks we sold the farm (netting only \$13,000 instead of the \$17,000 we had planned on), packed and headed for the Snoqualmie Valley.

I kept thinking of the comment of a man in Ed's department: "To try this at your age," he said, "you have to have either an awful lot of money or an awful lot of courage." I already knew that we might run out of money. I wished, and wished hard, that no matter what happened we would never, never run out of courage.

ED AND I had been reared on the forty-hour work week. As owners of our own business we discovered the seven-day week and the



fifteen-hour day. We also discovered certain things we had not realized about our building. Even that first day in Snoqualmie I had noticed that it seemed to need a coat of paint. But what it really needed was a coat of wood.

It had a remarkable floor. It was made of wide softwood boards, black with thirty-two years of oil and grime, and so worn the knots stood out like the veins on the back of an old woman's hands. It was springy; a heavy footfall on one end of a board almost flipped the person at the other end into the air. When the newspaper press got going, it bounced so hard that pressman Chet looked like a speedboat driver. There were holes in the floor, too, neatly covered with tin cans hammered flat. These kept the wildlife out, and also prevented us from discovering what was holding the building up.

"Central heating" was supplied by an oil burner near the press and a little black demon of a potbellied wood stove. Get near it and you broiled, move away and your teeth chattered. Luckily, at times there were so many of us inside the shop that our combined body heat must have added up impressively. Editorial offices, press-room, job printing, storage, bindery, Linotype, make-up tables, reception desk — all these and a lot more were jammed into a thirty-by-forty-foot plant.

Somehow, we got the paper out every Thursday. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays Ed worked all day and five hours' sleep at night was a luxury. Most every Wednesday night the stack of newsprint near the big press served as Ed's bed. We both looked forward to Sunday — the day we quit work at five o'clock.

The first Sunday afternoon we worked in the shop, we naively believed that this was a very unusual way for people who are their own bosses to spend a week-end. Therefore, I was amazed when a woman walked in, nodded in a friendly way, opened her purse and said she wanted to pay a bill.

I couldn't help asking, "How did you know we'd be here today?"

"How did I know!" Her eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Why, I've lived here for years. I know editors work *all* the time."

We spent our first Thanksgiving in the shop too, and it was our first holiday without a customer. "They're all at home, stuffing themselves with roast turkey," Ed said dryly.

He was gathering pages of a booklet we had printed. The children were crawling around on the floor salvaging pieces of type metal. I was paying the bills, but, no matter how carefully I checked, the sum we owed remained twice the sum in the bank account. At last I called to Ed. "Darling, we'll have to give the company account another transfusion from our personal account. I can't pay the bills."

Ed said grimly, "I guess I didn't tell you. The blood bank is dry. I've already sent my General Motors stock to a broker. We should have the money Monday."

We still owed a little more than \$21,000 on the paper — we had repaid our good friend his \$5000 — and we were selling securities just to meet regular expenses. It was a nice thought for Thanksgiving. "Don't worry, darling," Ed said, patting my shoulder, "we'll work out a system. . . ."

We did, and it was one we followed for many months. I started with the bills filed under the A's, and continued writing checks until our bank balance was used up. The next month, I started with the Z's and worked backward. I liked this, because we had fewer creditors with names beginning with X, Y and Z than we did at the front of the alphabet and I seemed to be making great strides toward solvency. The flaw in the system was one which creditors under the M's were quick to point out — they were in the middle of the file and I never got that far. So every third month I began with the M's, and worked in both directions.

We did celebrate Thanksgiving, in a way. We didn't get home to our small, cold rented house until eight o'clock and our holiday dinner consisted of pork chops served on the kitchen table. But we didn't set the alarm clock. "I'm my own boss," Ed said, shaking his fist at the little black clock. "I've got to get used to taking it easy, see?"

IGNORING the former publisher's sage advice, we began changing the paper the moment we walked in the door.

We changed its appearance, using many more pictures. We went out hunting for news and features, until the paper grew from eight to ten to fourteen and finally to an unprecedented eighteen pages a week. When the sale of Ed's General Motors stock revived us, we

bought an automatic press and a brand-new type cabinet, the cost of which we'll remember forever because it was one dollar a pound — price \$550, weight 550 pounds.

We had new panes of glass put in the windows, which released a good deal of cardboard for active duty, and we called in the roofing company, so that fifteen coffee cans were rendered obsolete. We raised the wage scale for everyone in the shop. "Making improvements is good business," was Ed's theory. "More production, a better product, happier employes." He was a little shaken, but not really dismayed, by the fact that every week we were paying out more than we were taking in.

A few months later when, like Marshal Foch at the Battle of the Marne, Ed figured that since our center was giving way and our right was pushed back, there was nothing to do but attack, we sold my own carefully preserved securities and built an addition to the print shop. Then we bought a big four-page press, which would save man-hours, and housed it there. It's not surprising that interested citizens in Snoqualmie were giving odds of twenty to one that the former owner would get the business back in less than a year.

"I know what you're going through," said a fellow small businessman by the name of Ote Sloan. "And I'll tell you this — if you can stick it out for a year, you've got a chance. If you can last for three, the guy you bought from will never get it back. And if you're still here five years from now — boy, they'll have to shoot you to get you out of here."

Then, in time for Christmas, we had a windfall. Some hitherto almost worthless oil stocks suddenly rose in value and brought us \$2000, and Christmas was wonderful. It was our first day off since we had become country publishers.

Of all the treasured possessions we left behind in Illinois, I had missed only my piano. I play by ear, right heel thumping and head bobbing, but without any kind of a musical instrument I feel lost. There was one thing I wanted more than a piano, and that was an old-fashioned church organ.

It was late that first Christmas Eve when the boys and I came home from the shop. There, waiting for me, was the most beautiful little reed organ I have ever seen. It had been made in Lebanon,

Pennsylvania, in the '80's, had come west via ship around Cape Horn, and in the fashion of its day was carved from music rack to candleholders. Ed had found it in the Congregational Church in Carnation, a nearby town, and he and our young ad salesman, Ort, had used the local furniture store's pickup to go down and get it.

"If you'll deliver my stuff, you can have the truck," the owner had agreed, so Ed and Ort had spent a busy Christmas Eve toting refrigerators and living-room suites all over the Valley so as to race fifteen miles to Carnation and bring me back my Christmas present.

They grinned proudly and asked, "Do you like it?"

I replied instantly by shedding buckets of tears.

"You're so sweet to me!" I wailed.

By NEW YEAR's, the *Record's* new publisher and his wife were showing symptoms of battle fatigue. Our nerves stood up like quills on a porcupine's back; a friendly pat on the back and we'd come up swinging. And then, when we were almost broke and almost broken, the weather administered the *coup de grâce*.

The storm of 1950 broke on New Year's Eve, and didn't let up for two months. It wasn't one blizzard; it was several. Eighty-mile-an-hour winds drove the snow into giant drifts. Then came sheets of freezing rain, and the thermometer would plummet to five or ten above zero and stay there until it was time for more snow. Every local businessman wondered how he could keep going and who would ever get to his place if he did.

The roads were alternately ice-covered, flooded, or blocked with snow, and power and phone lines were frequently down. Haggard crews from our little local companies raced from one "case of trouble" to the next. They worked in six feet of snow, seven days a week, and apologized because they could not work all night since they were the same men that had to make repairs in the daytime.

One bleak Wednesday night, at the height of a blow, our old Linotype broke down. The Linotype is the heart of the country print shop. When it quit cold the night before publication day, in that weather, we were in a truly desperate situation.

At two in the morning Ed telephoned Tom Dobbs, publisher of a weekly paper in the next county, and described the symptoms.

Tom said, "I think I know what's wrong. Now, first do this. . . ." Ed went back to the machine, carried out Tom's instructions, ran back to the phone and asked, "Yes, what next?" Tom's voice from the next county continued, "Now do this. . . ." And thus, at two in the morning, with one man standing barefoot on a cold floor at one end of the line, and another racing from Linotype to telephone at the other, the repair was made and we were back in business.

One of the worst storms that winter also came on a Wednesday night. When Ed rose in the morning from his usual bed of newsprint, the streets were blocked by snowdrifts four feet high. A glance outside convinced him the staff couldn't possibly get to work.

About ten minutes to eight he saw an odd procession making its



way toward the shop. At its head was the superintendent of schools, a six-foot-three-inch Norwegian. He was breaking trail, with great kicks of his size-thirteen boots. Behind him was his wife, our assistant editor, in ski pants, boots and lumberjacket. And right behind *her* was our little bookkeeper, also swathed to her ear lobes, carefully falling in and out of the super's footprints. They had walked two miles through some of the deepest snow in the Valley, and they made it right on time.

"I didn't think you'd come to work today," Ed said, all choked up with admiration.

"What?" the women exclaimed together. "Not come to work on Thursday?"

The only member of the *Record* staff humiliated by the weather was Ort, who liked to do the right thing and had a tendency to blush. As luck would have it, both Ed and I were out on the afternoon that our Johnny decided he couldn't wait until he got home. Ort, doubling as baby sitter while he drew up his ad schedule, knew of only one functioning lavatory in the vicinity — the one in the bank across the street. So, four-year-old John in tow, he went to the bank and asked one of the tellers if it would be all right . . . "Go right on in," the teller said, "through that office."

Ort opened the office door, only to see that a meeting of the board of directors was in progress within. "I . . . the little boy . . . excuse me . . . he . . ."

At that point Johnny straightened out the president of the bank, the vice-president, the cashier and five members of the board of directors as to just what it was he had to do.

"Come right in," the bank president said quickly. "Straight through, and to your right."

The board waited respectfully while Ort and Johnny walked over their feet and, errand accomplished, retraced their route. "Excuse me, uh, us," Ort mumbled, red-faced.

"That's all right, think nothing of it," the president said heartily. And added with the touch of true hospitality, "Any time."

THAT YEAR the rigors of life at the shop were far more bearable than the comforts of home. Rentals, in small towns, are houses the landlord doesn't want to live in himself. Our house, being innocent of insulation, simply could not be heated by its belching coal furnace. We joked about rushing the milk bottles into the refrigerator so that they wouldn't freeze and blow their tops, and we rushed ourselves into bed to keep from doing the same.

But the house did have three bedrooms, which I had felt we needed so as to put up a "live-in" housemaid. Hiram was at kindergarten every morning, but four-year-old Johnny needed all-day care, and I had to work. My experience with a succession of maids was discouraging, but the grand climax was Violet.

Violet gave no appearance of shrinking. She stood six feet tall and weighed upwards of two hundred and fifty pounds. She had worked around lumber camps for fifteen or twenty years, and her gentlest tone was pitched to rise above the roar of a gang saw. "Don't you reach for that sugar bowl!" she would bellow at the little boys during breakfast. "Want to get sugar diabetes?"

During the war Violet had sorted and stacked lumber in the big local lumber mill, and she was one of the best men they had. Being used to throwing heavy objects, she attacked housework in the same way. She hated to get down on her knees, she explained, because it was so hard to get up again, so she dusted under our big double bed by lifting the whole thing with one hand while she wielded a dust mop with the other. The only trouble was that her way of putting the bed back in place was simply to let go of it. One leg broke off in the crash. Ed repaired it, against Violet's thundering gale of apologies. Two days later the bed was back on the floor with two broken legs. This time, Violet explained in a tearful roar, all she did was lean on it.

Soon after, a living-room chair suffered the same fate.

"I can keep mending the furniture," Ed objected, "but about two more of her apologies and I'll be deafened for life. You'll have to fire her."

"Who, *me*?"

"Oh, all right. . . ." Ed is five feet six and he hadn't been getting half as much nourishment as Violet. But he took me and the boys to the shop and went back home to fire her. We've never again had a housekeeper "live in." When necessary, the children simply stayed with me at the shop.

ONE MIDWINTER day I began to wonder if it is possible to be a free-lance writer, a good mother and a help to your husband in his business all at the same time. It was the day our son Hiram disappeared.

The school bus took Hiram to kindergarten that morning as usual, and we deposited little Johnny at a baby sitter's. Then we left for Seattle to buy supplies, little dreaming that heavy snow would begin to fall about ten o'clock, and that the school young-

sters would be packed back into buses and returned to their homes.

Hi was an enthusiastic member of the North Bend kindergarten. He loved his teacher. He loved the routine, from the first roll call right on through the daily treat and the "rest period" ("heads down on the arms, children, eyes closed . . ."). The day he first walked out to the school bus and rode off with the "big kids," I stood in the doorway weeping senselessly, as mothers do when they are suddenly aware of important landmarks. I thought that was the moment when my elder son began his education. The same evening I discovered it was the beginning of mine.

"So you started out with roll call?" I asked eagerly. "You mean Mrs. Rud called the names and everyone had to answer either Present or Absent?"

And little Hi said patiently, "Mama, they could only answer Present."

I recognized my deficiencies right then, and even his kindergarten teacher had a tremor of self-doubt in her voice a month or so later when she telephoned and began the conversation with, "You know, I *do* want to answer all the children's questions. It isn't that I'm trying to dodge any issues. . . . It's only . . . well, has Hi told you about the starfish?"

The full force of Hi's five-year-old curiosity had been turned upon this recent acquisition to the kindergarten window zoo, and I had been pelted with questions concerning it. "Yes, indeed, he's told me about the starfish."

"Well, has there been any one question he's brought up particularly? You understand, I'd tell him, if I only knew. Or perhaps you have some idea where I could get the information?"

"Yes, there is one question he keeps repeating. He wants to know how starfish breathe."

"Breathe!" Silence, followed by an audible sigh of relief. "Oh, thank goodness! I thought he said *breed*!"

To Hi, one of the happiest aspects of school was getting there. Before the teachers caught on and put a stop to it, he used to hop onto the school bus that took the longest ride around Robin Hood's barn, arriving home some thirty minutes later than he should have.

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That first winter, Hi, being a kindergartener, was not entitled to a

seat on the crowded bus. "But I always sit on the same girl's lap," he said. "Her name is Lou Ann."

"Is she pretty?" Ed asked.

And once again Hiram had to be patient with his elders. "How would I know, Daddy," he asked, "when we're always facing the same way?"

The day Hi disappeared, the school bus dropped the children off at their homes, but because it was several hours early Hiram's mother wasn't at home to greet him. The driver, a quiet young man named Joe, was quick to notice that the house looked deserted. "Is your mother home?" he asked Hi.

Hi replied instantly, "My mama is working."

"I wouldn't like to leave you here alone," the driver said. "Perhaps you can tell me someplace else to drop you off."

But all Hi could think of was that he was going to get one of the best rides on the school bus he'd ever had.

It was certainly the longest — Hi was lucky enough to be on the bus that covers a hundred and three miles every day. Eventually, he got a seat right behind his hero, the driver, Joe. Joe talked to him, and gave him chewing gum and candy, and the party got more exclusive at every stop. For three hours, through one of the worst blizzards in forty years, he had one whale of a good time.

Meanwhile word that the schools had closed early caused a general alarm at the *Record* office. For three hours, Ort in his car and Hermia on the telephone covered the territory, arousing teachers, friends and baby sitters. Through it all the superintendent of schools held calmly to the correct solution. "Where would you be if you were a small boy?" said the big redhead Norwegian, who had dealt with a good many boys of all sizes. "Riding the school bus, of course."

When Hi's bus completed its world tour about 1:30 that afternoon, the superintendent was waiting in his car to deliver our supremely happy son to the *Record* office.

AFTER Hiram's three-hour bus ride, I chided myself as a mother. Admittedly, our boys didn't seem to fade on a diet of foods I could prepare quickly. ("My wife is a good cook," I overheard Ed say to a



friend. "A real fancy dinner takes her fifteen minutes, but an ordinary meal she can fix in a hurry.") And our clothing was clean: I did the washing at night, and more than once hung it out in a back yard illuminated by the headlights of the car. But there is no "home life" for youngsters whose father works at the shop seven days a week and whose mother pedals an Addressograph instead of a sewing machine.

Now I can see that our little boys enjoyed a special kind of home life in reverse, at the shop. They frequently ate lunch there and, if an afternoon nap was indicated, they were bedded down on Ed's stack of newsprint, and covered with coats and sweaters, while the job press banged out a lullaby. Ed and I spent more hours with our children than most parents ever do and the environment, inky and noisy as it was, didn't hurt them a bit.

The modern mother is endlessly patient, lest she "reject" her children. She shields them from knowledge of financial or domestic worries, lest they lose their sense of "security." She puts her children's desires ahead of her own, lest in her selfishness she "frustrate" them. And if the beast in her occasionally gets the upper hand, she suffers from a sense of guilt. But our children gained in independence what they lost by having the nest pulled out from under them. They knew the cost of engravings and the volume of adver-

tising and the most recent repair bill for one of our priceless mechanical heirlooms. They developed a healthy respect for work, an understanding of the sweat behind their allowances and moving-picture money.

Hi was all of six years old when he first asked, "Daddy, did we get enough advertising this week?" His way of describing the villain in a moving picture he and Johnny had seen was, "He was a bad man. He killed people, and he didn't even pay his bills!" The boys observed from the very start that their parents were always tiredest on Paper Day; boisterous as Hi and Johnny might be the rest of the week, on Thursdays they walked quietly and kept their voices down. They accepted the fact that Ed and I were human beings, not resentfully, but with understanding, and learned early to think of someone else.

Nor did it hurt them to work at the shop themselves. Once they were both old enough, the boys frequently spent the afternoon at the shop, burning wastepaper, sorting out leads and slugs and collecting sweepings of metal for the casting machine. We didn't pay them. We gave them money for other chores, many of them less deserving of pay than these. At the shop they were to share the load as partners, and we would not put a price on that.

Nor did we say, "You must work so many hours. . . ." If they were to learn anything at all from this experience of ours, let it be that the man who is his own boss gives up the right to quit work on the last second of the last minute of the forty-hour week; he works until the work is done. The measure would not be "How long?" but "How good?" More good training — and we stuck to it, though their help often enabled us to do a job in just a bit more time than it would have taken to finish it without them.

COMPLIMENTS were many and complaints few from the readers who filed in during those first months, but one word of criticism always threw us into a fit of blues that twenty of praise couldn't pull us out of. "You changed everything around. I liked it the way it was," one reader would say; and the next, "We just about stopped reading the paper, but now you've made so many changes we're enjoying it again." When a subscriber stomped into the office and

issued an ultimatum of some kind, Ed and I consoled ourselves with the quip we'd heard another country publisher make: "You have to be read to be wrong."

It was possible to find a good deal to complain about in the *Record*. But our subscribers weren't consistent. The man who laid us out one moment was the one who bought fifty copies of the paper when he left on vacation; he was going to visit friends all through the Middle West and he wanted to show them how much better *his* home-town paper was than *their* home-town paper. The woman who announced in the presence of six other customers that she had no interest in the paper had come into the office to pay her subscription two years in advance.

Not all our first experiences were shadowed by our early difficulties. Nothing could obliterate the joy of living in the country and doing business in a small town. The people of the Valley would have been amazed to know how often delight settled too suddenly in big lumps in our throats. Among the delights was our first church supper, when we realized the advantage of living in a heavily Scandinavian community. The ladies were obviously accustomed to feeding loggers and each plate contained the nutritional requirements for a man eight feet tall.

Then there was our first meeting with a local minister. He was a man of the cloth, all right, but that day it happened to be a bright-red logger's shirt. The rest of his outfit consisted of an unclerical assembly of knee boots, work pants and disreputable felt hat. A pipe was between his teeth and he leaned over the counter, hat on the back of his head. I didn't realize it, but he was making a formal visit. As he left, Ed said, "It was nice of you to stop in at our place."

The minister grinned. "I have 'a place,' too. Why don't you return the compliment?" and with a friendly wave he was gone. The Snoqualmie Valley version of the ministerial call.

Then there was the time our first "mechanical difficulty" struck. Our witching hour — the hour our papers were delivered — was 4:30 Thursday afternoon. By then the afternoon mail had been distributed, and everyone who came to the post office expected to find his *Record* tucked into the mailbox along with his letters.

On this particular Thursday the newspaper folder gave one last monumental squeak and collapsed in a torpor. No amount of coaxing could arouse it. There were three hundred papers still unfolded, and mailing time was literally minutes away. So we organized assembly-line fashion and folded and trimmed three hundred newspapers by hand. The superintendent of schools stopped in to say hello to his wife and, seeing our predicament, rolled up his sleeves and joined the line. The postmaster was afraid we wouldn't finish on time so he raced over to the shop and folded papers, too. "I'll work overtime tonight," he grinned, "so Uncle Sam won't be gyped." And he did.

Can you imagine the postmaster of New York City rushing over to help get the mailed edition of a paper out? The superintendent of the schools of four towns has an important job to worry about. But when the last *Record* was folded, addressed and mailed, he straightened up, looked at the clock and exclaimed, "We made it!"

ONE DAY a clean-cut young man, and I knew instantly a shy one, opened the office door, hesitated and, obviously relieved to see no one but me, proceeded slowly to the counter.

"I want to put an ad in the paper." He looked at me hopefully. "But I don't know how to say it."

"You just tell me what it is you want to sell," I said.

He looked a little uncomfortable. "Well, it isn't that," he said. "What it is, I just got back from the service and I live with my sister and brother-in-law. What I like to do is dance. I don't know any girls around here so I thought I'd put something in the paper, asking for a dancing partner."

"Wouldn't it be better to get out and meet some girls, and choose a dancing partner yourself? Your sister and brother-in-law must have friends. . . ."

"That's just it," the young man said mournfully. "Their friends are married. All they talk about is their new television set, or their new baby, or how to pay for them."

I had to suppress a sympathetic grin, and at that moment the dangerous desire to play Miss Lonelyhearts was born. I reached for a classified-ad blank and a pencil. "How about this?"

*Respectable young man would like to get
in touch with girl who enjoys dancing.*

He read it slowly, out loud, and I was rewarded by a great big smile of relief. "Gee, that's swell!" he said. We added his brother-in-law's telephone number — 8732. He should have informed me then that he wasn't going to tell anyone, even his sister and brother-in-law, about placing the ad.

It attracted a lot of attention, a little island of excitement in a full page of pigs for sale and baby sitters wanted. Everyone wanted to know who had placed it. Some telephoned the *Record* office. "Sorry, I cannot give out that sort of information," I said again and again, feeling sillier every time. The more resourceful ran a finger down the columns of telephone numbers in the little local telephone book until they came to 8732.

The brother-in-law! A married man, and he has such a cute wife and they always seemed to get along together. . . . All his friends wondered why he was advertising for a dancing partner and they didn't mind asking him. He was mad enough to break the editor in two and when he turned up at the *Record* office he looked big enough to do it.

"You talk to him," I whispered to Ed in the back shop. "You explain how it happened."

"Oh, no," Ed said feelingly. "You composed the ad."

"Coward," I hissed.

"He's not so likely to hit a woman," Ed assured me.

I made a face and went into the front office. Ed's prediction was correct. The unfortunate brother-in-law looked as if he wanted to slug someone but he held himself down to a few words, selected from what I guessed to be a pretty full vocabulary. That was the end of it, as far as the *Record* was concerned. But I heard indirectly that it went on for some time at No. 8732. If the brother-in-law was angry because everyone thought he had advertised for a dancing partner, his wife was even angrier; she thought he had, too.

FRIDAY was sometimes a bad day, simply because it came after Thursday. But one Friday that first year promised to set a record.

The night before, we had received an unusual number of "Thursday calls" — telephone calls from readers who didn't like something and had to tell us about it right away.

In the morning mail was a little pink slip from the bank. It informed us that our account was overdrawn and noted that they would have to charge us one dollar for breaking the bad news.

"We print these slips for them at seven slips for a cent," Ed said sadly. "And buy them back at a buck apiece."

"And today's payday!"

I meant for everyone else, of course. Neither of us had received a pay check since we bought the business. Ed said firmly, "We'll pray something good comes in on Monday."

"And I'll make out pay checks as usual."

"Absolutely." Ed grinned weakly. "You don't suppose we could talk them into cashing them someplace else, like, for instance, San Antonio, Texas?"

There were other diversions that day. Promptly at five o'clock our current printer, Mr. Toski, appeared at the front desk. He grinned toothlessly and, once he had his pay check in hand, he quit.

Snarling Mr. Jenkins had quit or been fired — it was a delicate point — some time before, but we soon discovered there were tramp printers aplenty. They were of varying degrees of skill and sobriety, with no money, no wives and no references. They stayed a few weeks, perhaps a few months.

We watched through the window as Mr. Toski turned sharply into the open door of the nearest tavern. Ed turned to me. "I don't know what we're going to do now, but you look tired. You need a change. Take this order of letterheads down to the Congregational Church in Carnation. The drive will do you good."

"You do it. You're more tired than I am."

"That's just it. I'd fall asleep at the wheel."

So with the printing order in the back seat, I headed down the Valley. I found the minister, the Reverend Walter McGettigan, sitting in his office, a cubbyhole which had apparently been filled with papers, books, pipes and Bibles and then stirred up with a spoon. He unfolded, grinned and shook hands.

"Here's your stationery," I said, thrusting it at him.

"Good. Swell. Glad you came down. Let me show you around."

"Oh, no, I can't take the time. I've got to hurry back."

"Mm . . ." The minister studied me briefly. What he saw was a woman with circles under her eyes and a costume she had apparently leaped into from a distance of six feet. "Mm . . ." he repeated, while I jittered from one foot to the other.

"You like to play the organ?" he asked suddenly. He knew about my Christmas present, the little reed organ, for it was his church board who had sold it to Ed.

"Love to!"

"Ever play a Hammond? There's a beauty in the church."

"No, really, I couldn't. . . ." I backed up. The suggestion that I do something other than work threw me into a panic. "I've got to hurry. . . ."

The minister said firmly, "Forget it. So far you've hardly completed a sentence without the word 'hurry.' Now, come on . . ." and he took a firm grasp of my arm and half pushed me out of his office, down the walk and into the church.

"Here's the light switch," he explained, "and here's the key to the organ. You hold this button down, so, and this one here, so, and then you let this one go. Now, there's the foot pedal, to make it louder. . . ." I was probably murmuring something about hurrying when he ambled out, whistling. At the door, he called over his shoulder, "Turn off the lights and the organ when you're through. And remember where the switches are, for the next time you come. The church is always open."

The interior of the chapel was cool. One light shone over the altar, another across my hands, groping over the organ's intricate keyboard and miraculously finding a tune. I began with hymns, moved on to symphonic themes. I didn't play well, because I don't know how; but with each tune some inner knot came untied, some invisible wire loosened. I played for an hour, and by the end of that time I knew we had been right to buy the *Valley Record*. I knew we would make a go of it. Another and better printer than Mr. Toski would come along. . . . My fingers launched gaily into "Yankee Doodle," and I wound up my hour at the organ in a blaze of chords and runs.



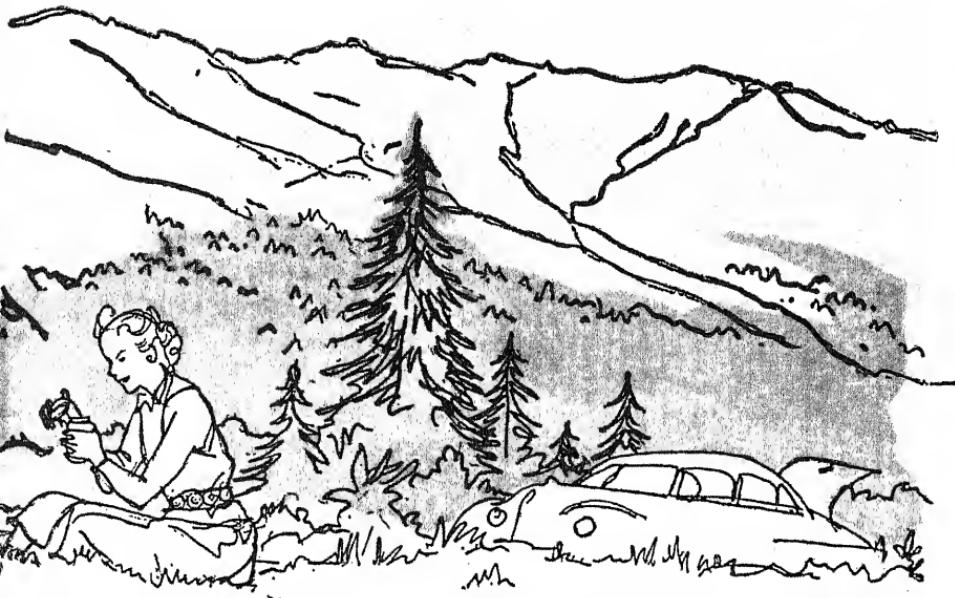
I turned off the organ, flipped the light switch and, suddenly rather sheepish, wondered if the not too religious selection I had just polished off had carried into the minister's study. I all but tiptoed toward the car. But I need not have worried. Through the open window of his office I heard the Reverend McGettigan whistling. And he was whistling "Yankee Doodle."

ON A WARM summer day the banker across the street smiled pleasantly and said, "Hello, Ed." As far as I could determine that was the only reason that after nine months in the Valley my husband began talking about building a home of our own. "We don't want to spend another winter in a rented house," he said.

"Now wait a minute. . . . How will we *pay* for it?" I was beginning to wish that the Powers who were overseeing our affairs would write me some new lines.

"Why, honey," Ed said in a puzzled tone of voice, "we haven't even got a house plan. There's *lots* of time."

That was about the first of July. The first week in August we



had the land, two acres of meadow right at the foot of Mount Si. Gray crags pierced the clouds four thousand feet over our heads. The Snoqualmie River flowed between us and the mountain's base. Behind us lay pastures and groves of alder and fir.

Sometimes we packed a picnic supper, sat in the middle of the meadow and, chewing, looked up at the mountain.

"I love it here," I sighed, with my mouth full.

Ed nodded. "So do I. But I'd love it more if there were a house on it. It can get durned cold around here in January."

About the tenth of August Ed called in a young builder named Barney Phillips. On a piece of typing paper he quickly sketched a house with three bedrooms, a living room, a bath and a kitchen. "Could you build that house for me, Barney?"

Barney squinted at the pencil scratchings. "Sure. Just watch."

We were to pay so much when the foundation was poured, so much more when the walls and roof were up. Receipts were good at the shop, a check came in for a magazine article I had sold, and we were able to keep up.

We moved in before the carpenters had moved out. The house was a far cry from the pictures I had clipped out of magazines. But it was our own, and it was in the right place. October — just one year since we had assumed ownership of the *Record*. I sighed. "I never dreamed we'd have a home of our own so soon."

Ed had grown thoughtful, which I should have recognized as a sign. "The house is too small," he said.

"I like the house!" I cried.

He didn't seem to hear me. "Just as soon as we can, we'll add a bigger living room, with windows to the ceiling, looking right up at the mountain. And there should be another bedroom —"

"Ed!"

He grinned. "Happy first anniversary, sweetheart!" he said, pulling me down into the chair beside him. I should have told him he was crazy. But it slipped my mind.

THEN it was our second Thanksgiving in the Valley, and this time we had something to be thankful for! We were going to eat turkey instead of pork chops. And we were going to go home at noon. "Progress!" said the eternal optimist I had promised to love, honor and obey.

The side of the picture he chose to look at was truly a bright one. Our subscription list continued to grow. With our new equipment we were turning out more and better commercial printing. Yes, we had made progress, and in only fourteen months.

The picture had another side. After a year, we still had a big debt. But Ed knew the figures better than I did. If he could grin and say, "Progress," I had better learn to grin back.

When we moaned about help problems now, we meant help in the mechanical end of the business. Up front in the editorial department our course was steady — even taking into account our correspondents.

To a country editor, a correspondent is a housewife who writes about the doings in her own community. She gets her "scoops" over the telephone in the kitchen, she writes them in pencil on any kind of paper she can find, and she often has to wash the pie crust off her hands before she can get to work. Ed put me in charge of

these reporters. He suggested that I drive around and visit them.

In some ways, our correspondents were all the same. They were all friendly, they all knew more about the Valley and the *Valley Record* than I did, and they all offered to quit because "you'll probably want to look for someone good — after all, you come from Chicago." One of our correspondents had been writing for the paper for eighteen years. She was now composing wedding stories about young people whose birth announcements she had written. Her name, to people of all ages, was Flossie.

Flossie fretted about getting us every single "doing" — every visitor, every pinochle party, every auto trip into Seattle. If the morning mail brought us her news, the afternoon delivery was apt to contain a frantic note asking, "Did I write up Mrs. Sarno's news? You know how she is. And did I spell her cousin's name right?" She worried particularly about finishing her news before the rural carrier came by. There was always some important bit she received by telephone five minutes before he was due. Again and again her envelope of news contained a scribbled note, "Hope you can read this. I'm writing it at the mailbox while Julius (the rural carrier) is waiting. Please forgive handwriting. . . ."

Writing about Grange meetings and church suppers for a country weekly is not the way to earn even your first million. But Flossie paid the light bill, and bought a piano for her son, and paid for his music lessons. And old subscription files prove that, even when her earnings were only a dollar or two a month, she always paid for her own subscription.

When I announced that *Record* correspondents would hereafter get their *Records* free, Flossie was more defiant than pleased. "I always paid for my paper," she said, and three times a letter from her contained three one-dollar bills and three times I sent them back before I won the point. Flossie, being British by descent, lost every one of our battles except the last one. She accepted the subscription, all right, but every year thereafter she gave in return a box of homemade preserves. Wild-blackberry jam, plum jelly, peach preserves, apple butter, pickled melon rind, mint jelly with the leaves right in it — I couldn't have bought them in a store for five times the price of a subscription.

Flossie's juniors on the staff, women who had written for the *Record* for only eight or ten years, were like her. Every one of my business calls ended at the kitchen table over a pot of fresh hot coffee and a plate of homemade cookies. One day, I visited four correspondents; when I got back to the shop a truthful account of my day sounded like the menu for a Scandinavian smorgasbord.

Theoretically, I was supposed to teach our correspondents how and what to write. "Look at that!" Ed would say. "'Mrs. Buchmeister passed away June 30 and was buried Saturday, June 26.'" Even the Linotype operator had been startled by this one, for in capital letters she had written afterward, "NO WONDER SHE DIED? ? ? ? ? ? ?" There were others, almost every week.

"John Riley and Sam Duncan left town this week," a correspondent once reported. "They are to be induced into the Army." Another sent us an item about a local boy who made a trip to Chicago and telephoned a local girl enrolled at Northwestern University. The story read, "While in Chicago, John Winters had a nice visit with Margaret Mathews, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Mathews by telephone."

The simplest part of my job as boss man for the correspondents was hiring and firing. They never did anything to fire them for, and they did the hiring.

The first time it happened, I was nonplused. A correspondent decided to move into Seattle. I heard about it from the woman she had selected to replace her. Another of our reporters gave up her job because of poor health. Her note of resignation said, "My neighbor, Mrs. Turner, says to tell you she wants to write the news so she started this week." In time I got to like this editorial matriarchy. It saved me considerable worry. Except for the day I stood up on my own feet, hired a new correspondent, then found the retiring reporter had also hired a new correspondent. I took a leaf out of Solomon's book and divided the territory amicably in two.

I hired our next replacement by telephone. She mentioned she was still in school and we could pick up her news at the principal's office every Monday.

I covered the mouthpiece and whispered to Ed, "She's a high-school girl. Do you think we ought to hire anyone that young?"

Ed shrugged. "Your department, dear. . . ."

So I hired her, sight unseen. On the appointed day I went to the high school. No Cedar Falls news at the principal's office. Her name was not on the enrollment list. Had I tried the junior high school?

"Oh, *no*," I objected. "She can't be that young." But I did drive to the junior high school. No, she wasn't a student there — how about the grade school? I didn't believe it, but it was true. Our only local representative in a community of several hundred people was practicing penmanship in the back row of the sixth grade. (We found out she needed the practice.) But she turned out to be a pretty good correspondent. Her mother could spell, her father could type and her sister knew what was going on. She's the only reporter I know who blew her first pay check on bubble gum.

I daydreamed about replacing three or four of our correspondents with one well-trained newspaperwoman; so for a time we had a journalism-school graduate on the staff. Her tenure of office will be forever remembered by the town of Carnation for the day she telephoned the Carnation fire department for news.

She found two telephone numbers listed. One rings the department office; the other is a special hookup ringing the telephone of every fireman in town. She chose the latter. Volunteer firemen dropped whatever they were doing, grabbed their coats and raced to the phone. One of them was sick abed with flu, but barefoot and weak he got to the phone, too; and all twelve firemen heard simultaneously the businesslike voice of our journalism graduate: "Hello, this is the *Valley Record* calling. Have you any news for the paper this week?"

Soon after I took over the correspondents, Margie, our book-keeper, who doubled in brass as mailing department and receptionist, gave notice.

"Don't worry," I said airily. "I'll take over her job."

Ed looked skeptical. "I don't see how you can write and keep house and do so many different jobs at the shop, too."

"All it takes is careful scheduling," I retorted.

Finally Ed agreed. After that we lived by schedules and lists of jobs. It made for efficiency, of a sort, if doing every job at a dead

run is efficient. If a friend from out of town dropped in for a chat he found himself talking to the tops of our heads; we were looking at our watches.

When I took over Margie's job, Ed suspected that no schedule in the world would make a bookkeeper out of me. Luckily, he kept a sharp eye on my efforts to take Margie's place, and within two weeks we were advertising for a bookkeeper.

But I made good as a mailer, though Ed didn't quite trust me with anything that had a motor. He bought a treadle-type addressing machine and *I* was the motor. "This thing is so simple," he said kindly, "I don't think you can possibly do anything wrong."

Addressing 2000 papers a week for 156 weeks comes to 312,000 times I pushed that treadle down. Soon I began to claim, sometimes loudly, that the mailing department never made a mistake. Lucky for me that no one noticed the day a stencil stuck while I kept pushing papers through. Lucky, too, the man named Lee Lewis, if he needed something to start fires: he received eighty-three copies of the *Valley Record* that week.

MEANWHILE, in the back shop, Ed again fell back on his theory that if he couldn't find a man to do a job, the only way to get the paper out was to do the job himself.

When the Army drafted the apprentice who was doing the press work, Ed stepped up and said, "I'll run the press."

A press run normally took about two hours. It was noon when Ed climbed up to the pressman's platform, flipped the switch and slid the first sheet of paper into the big press. Instantly there was trouble: the paper persisted in gluing itself to the ink rollers.

When it was still jamming at two o'clock, I said, "Stop for a while, Ed. You haven't eaten anything."

Ed shook his head. "I'm not hungry."

"Can't you make him quit?" Olga whispered. "He looks sick."

But Ed would not give up. "I've got to learn sometime," he said doggedly, as the paper caught again. At six o'clock I went out to the restaurant, and brought back a hamburger. Ed ate it because I climbed up on the platform beside him and held it under his nose.

He finished the entire press run just a few minutes before mid-

night. He got down very slowly, as if every joint and muscle ached. His face, despite smears of ink, looked pale and haggard. He walked to the water faucet, drew a glass of water and took the aspirin bottle down from the shelf. His hands trembled as he shook three tablets into his palm.

"Thank goodness that's over," I said. "Now you can go home." Ed shook his head. "I've got to write the editorial."

I was worried, and hence exasperated. "You've got to get some sleep!" I said crossly. "You'll be sick!"

Ed grinned. "That's a fine way to congratulate me in my hour of triumph. I just learned to run the press."

"You can't do everything. It worries me. . . ."

"I'm doing what I've got to do. Cheer up. You look gloomy."

I didn't say it, but it was on my tongue that I would not look so gloomy if he did not look so ill.

In December, Ort, our advertising salesman, told us he had been offered an opportunity too good to pass up, and would be leaving after Christmas. "I'm not going to replace him," Ed said. "I may not be worth my salt in the back shop, but advertising is right in my line."

As the *Record's* ad salesman, Ed set a new record in low pressure. He liked to call on businessmen, because he liked people. The only part of selling advertising which Ed disliked was mentioning anything about an ad.

"Call on Dan Thomasen?" I'd ask.

"Yes, had a swell talk. He's put in a new line."

"Is he advertising this week?"

"Well, I don't know. He might. He didn't say."

"Ed, listen, didn't you ask him?"

Ed shook his head. "He knew what I was there for. If he wanted an ad, he would have told me."

The first night Ed got home from the ad beat the car was loaded like Santa's sleigh. A copper-bottom frying pan — he had called at the hardware store. A nylon slip — he'd been in the dry-goods store. A bicycle horn, groceries, phonograph records. "Just doesn't seem right to leave a store," he explained sheepishly, "without throwing some business their way."



It was bad enough for him to shoulder the difficult job, worse still to add it to so many other burdens. "It must be wonderful to have so much variety in your work," a friend wrote. But by two o'clock in the morning, the only variety Ed was in condition to appreciate would have been that of going to bed on time.

I was at home, working on my writing one morning in January, when the telephone rang. I recognized the voice instantly. Calm as it was, it brought a funny tight feeling to my throat. It was our family doctor.

"Please don't be alarmed," he said, "but we've got your husband here at the hospital. He's resting comfortably. Could you come over right away?"

"Resting comfortably . . ." I'd heard that expression before.

"He got sick at the office," the doctor said gently. "Don't be frightened. But come, as soon as you can."

I dropped the receiver. Sometimes my old wreck of a car ran, sometimes it didn't. "Please, God . . ." I heard myself say out

loud as I stepped on the starter. The motor turned over, stopped, then responded with a roar. At every turn, every stop street, I recited each move — slow down, now look to the left, now signal. "Keep your head," an inner voice pleaded with me. "Ed's never had a sick day in his life. He's been working too hard, but he can take it. . . ." And another inner voice cried, "But how long can he take it? He's forty-four years old."

I must have presented anything but the picture of a woman "keeping her head" when I finally reached the hospital — running into the waiting room in a pair of faded blue jeans and an old plaid shirt, looking wild-eyed and maybe a little bit silly.

The doctor met me in the corridor. It was disturbing to hear him choose his words so carefully. "He's all right, he's doing fine," he kept repeating as he told me what had happened. Two of the men from the shop had brought Ed to the hospital. They reported that he had complained several times that morning of a sharp pain around his heart. When they suggested he go home, he had flatly refused. "I can't relax until the paper's out," he answered. Then suddenly he doubled up with pain and blacked out.

When he regained consciousness the two men half carried him to the car. He was clutching at his chest and could hardly speak, but he did manage to whisper, "Don't tell Charlotte."

"It could be a perforated ulcer, or a heart attack," the doctor was saying. "But I haven't been able to find anything organically wrong. I suspect his real trouble is nervous exhaustion."

"Where is he?"

"Right down the hall, in that little examining room. Now remember, we've got him under sedation. Don't be disturbed if he doesn't sound natural. Be calm and cheerful, for his sake."

Ed was awake, or at least awake enough to hear and see me. He tried to smile. His face seemed strained; the pupils of his eyes were dilated and very black. I said something like, "Well, for gosh sakes, what're you doing here?" in that too-bright, too-cheerful voice I've always resented in nurses.

He said something, but his voice was so weak I couldn't hear him. I leaned over the bed, and he repeated his question. "Everything going all right at the shop?"

"Everything's fine."

"Are you sure they got the changes into that hardware ad?"

I nodded emphatically.

"Don't let them put both grocery ads on the same page."

"I won't."

I thought my husband might be dying. He was as scared as I, because he thought so, too. But the two of us sat in that little hospital room and talked about every finicky detail of that week's issue of the *Record*. Finally Ed whispered, "You better get down to the shop." I was at the door when he signaled to me to come back. "As soon as the paper is out, will you come back to the hospital?"

"Darling, of course. . . ." I leaned down to kiss him, and he murmured drowsily against my cheek, "Good, I want to see a copy of the paper."

At noon the next day the doctor called me and said, "You'd better come and get your husband."

"But I thought he was to stay in the hospital for a week."

There was a smile in the doctor's voice. "The idea was to force him to rest. Believe me, he's not."

When I got to the hospital the doctor repeated his opinion that there was nothing physically wrong.

"Then how could he suffer so much pain?" I asked.

"Nervousness," the doctor said. "The nerves around his heart and stomach caused a contraction of the blood vessels, so that it was hard for his heart to pump blood through them. Result was severe pain. When he relaxes, the heart and blood vessels function normally and the pain ceases. Keep him in bed for at least two weeks. Then what he needs is a good vacation."

Ed hadn't had a vacation for three years. To say the word seemed daring; to think about it, an extravagance.

"But of course a vacation is not a permanent solution," the doctor continued. "There's one basic cause of his illness, and it's the thing you've got to correct. He's working too hard; or rather, worrying too much. Work itself may not hurt him, but the tension he feels over it will."

"Two weeks in bed," I repeated, as if saying something often

enough and calmly enough made it come true. "And then a good vacation."

ON MARCH 7, two weeks before our vacation was to begin, Johnny came down with the mumps. I was so worried about his being well enough to travel that I scarcely noticed that Ed was sporting a bad head cold. Then Hi got sick. Mumps.

With two days to go, Johnny and Hiram were both back in school. But that day Hi fell playing a game during recess, and hit his head on the concrete.

"A slight concussion," the doctor said. "Keep him in bed today, and very quiet." March 19th.

The next day Ed's cold was worse but Hi was better. I got everything packed, cleaned out the refrigerator, took the house plants to the neighbor's and made arrangements for her to feed the cats. Tomorrow, tomorrow, we would leave on vacation.

I woke up the next morning with the left side of my face swollen into a painful half-moon. I stumbled to the telephone. And literally stumbled. On the rug right below the telephone the big black mother cat was occupied in producing a new litter of big black kittens. That did it. I burst into loud sobs.

Somehow I managed to dial the doctor's number. "Doctor," I wailed, "Doctor, come quick, our cat is having kittens!"

"Oh, I see," the doctor said, after a scarcely perceptible pause. "Anything else? Wasn't your vacation to start today?"

"Yes, and now we can't! It's *me!*"

The doctor asked me several questions. "Doesn't sound like mumps," he concluded. "Doesn't sound contagious. Look, for heaven's sakes, put that fool cat outside, and all the rest of you get into the car and *leave*. Don't wait another minute."

But we had to wait until the paper was out, so it wasn't until 4:30 that afternoon that we started out. Hi was on a pile of blankets in the back seat, nursing his concussion. Johnny was catching Ed's cold. My face was so badly swollen I could scarcely open my mouth or swallow. There was no shopping for a good motel that night; we pulled into the first one we came to. Ed carried Hi in and laid him gently on the bed. The little boy's skin felt tight and hot.

I had packed a box of food, and I began to cook supper for Johnny. "Hungry?" I said to Ed.

He shook his head. "You?"

"I couldn't swallow if I tried."

But Johnny had not lost his appetite and soon the room was filled with the smell of beef sizzling in butter.

Johnny was sitting down to a steak sandwich while Ed and I were looking bleakly at each other when Hi's voice split the unhappy silence. "Say, Mom," it said, and it was the heartiest, healthiest voice in the world. "I smell something good. What are you cooking?"

Ed and I tripped over each other to get to the bed. Hi was sitting up, bright-eyed, wide awake. "I feel just about starved," he said. "You got any steak?"

"I'll cook it for him," said Ed, with a slap-happy grin.

"No, I will!"

"Let's both cook. And say, let's make enough for all of us."

Thus began our first vacation. It was a good one.

SEPTEMBER 1951 — the last lap of our first two years as country publishers — was a memorable month. Hiram advanced to the second grade, Johnny came of age and went from kindergarten into "real school." Hi began his first music lessons, and I began a long term of standing over him to make sure he practiced. These were landmarks to our life at home. At the shop, all was well.

There seemed nothing ominous in the fact that Hi celebrated the end of his first three weeks in the second grade by "coming down with something." After school that Friday he was pale and listless. Company was coming for dinner. I slowed my course from stove to sink just long enough to ask if he felt all right.

"Just tired, Mama. And I've got a headache."

The complaint sounded odd on the lips of a seven-year-old boy. I gave Hi an aspirin. Voluntarily he went to his room and to bed, which also would have struck me as strange if I hadn't been rushing to finish dinner preparations.

When I went into Hi's room the next morning, Johnny was sitting at the foot of Hi's bed with a coloring book. Hi was unnaturally still and his face was turned to the wall.

Johnny looked up. "Hi's sick," he said. "He threw up."

Mechanically, I went through the routine. The thermometer — it read 103½. A damp towel for his forehead. A pan. One gains a feeling of security by going through these old, familiar measures.

Then Hi gripped my hand with sudden intensity as he whispered, "Mama, my back aches, just terrible."

High fever, aching joints. Once again I ran to the telephone to call the family doctor.

At the time he was the only doctor in the Valley, doing the work of four men. I knew how busy he was, how reluctant to make a house call unless he felt it was absolutely necessary. So when he said, "I'll be right out," I was convinced my fears were well founded.

After he had examined Hi I followed him out of the room. Bluntly, I asked what the boy had.

"It's too early to tell," the doctor said thoughtfully. "Call me immediately if he shows any new symptoms. Watch especially for difficulty in swallowing. . . ."

Ed stayed home all day Saturday, ironically, his first Saturday at home since we bought the newspaper. We hardly mentioned the bindery work stacked up for him at the shop, and his reason for leaving it undone we did not refer to at all.

As the day progressed it was clear that, whatever Hi had "come down with," he was fast getting well. By nightfall his temperature was almost normal and he had eaten and enjoyed two meals. When both boys had fallen into peaceful sleep, Ed and I collapsed into the living-room chairs and admitted how worried we'd been.

"Thank goodness, *that's* over," I breathed.

Ed nodded. "I'll have to work at the shop tomorrow, to do that bindery job." He leaned back, eyes closed. At last he said, more to himself than to me, "Only thing is, I wish I knew what it was Hi had. . . ."

Monday, Hiram was restless at home; Wednesday, on the advice of the doctor, I sent him back to school. He seemed a little tired that evening, but nothing more. Thursday being Paper Day, I told him he could help deliver newspapers.

I remember the desk where I was sitting, even the direction I was facing, when I first noticed something was wrong. The paper

was out; Hiram walked past me to get his jacket. He was limping.

"Hi?"

"Yes, Mama."

"Does your shoe hurt?"

He looked down at his feet. "Why, no," he said, genuinely surprised. "Nothing hurts."

Ed came up behind me — I could feel it.

Hi looked at me in a puzzled way. "What's the matter, Mama? Is there something wrong?"

"I . . . I thought you were limping. . . ."

"Huh?" He laughed. "Gosh, no," and he turned and walked away from us toward the front door. He was limping, badly.

Polio . . .

THE COUNTY public-health nurse knew how to be kind. She was matter-of-fact without being blunt, sympathetic without frightening me. She filled out her report, and then drew a large yellow sign from her brief case. "Everyone in the house, except the bread-winner, must remain in quarantine for three weeks after the day Hiram first ran a fever." And as she left she tacked the sign on the outside of the kitchen door. Groceries would be delivered to the back door, but I was to wait until the deliveryman had gone before I brought them in. The milkman would leave paper cartons, which I was to burn.

Though I had charge of Hiram's painful therapy during the following weeks, it was Ed who suffered most. Ed had to meet people and answer questions. He had to keep his mind on his work, when it was filled with one question — how crippled will Hiram be? At night, I fell asleep quickly, exhausted by many tasks, while Ed lay sleepless and worried.

It is no wonder that, of the four of us, he was the only one who cried. Not at home, but downtown, when someone asked him, "How's the boy today?" There on the main street, with a friend's hand on his shoulder, the wondering and the worrying suddenly grew too big, and he burst into deep and racking sobs. The man led him into a deserted alley. "Don't be ashamed of crying, Ed," he said to him. "My God, man, don't be ashamed. . . ."

Before Hiram's illness we had heard of only one case of polio in the Valley. The signs may have been before us a hundred times — the twisted back, the leg brace, the useless arm — but we had not had the eyes to see. Every day one of those who extended sympathy added, "We've had polio in our family, too." The woman whose tall, handsome son walked straight because he wore one built-up shoe, and we had never guessed it. The clerk who had waited on us for two years without mentioning the fact that his little sister was living in an iron lung.

We discovered the community of sorrow and the community of love for children. One friend sent Hi a present only a sensitive and patient man would have troubled to prepare. Ed came staggering into the kitchen one evening under a tremendous cardboard box. Stalks, leaves and vines were spilling over the top. He carried it into Hiram's room, and set it down by his bed. "Bill Hronek said he knew you fellows came from a farm in Illinois," he told the wide-eyed boys. "So he sent you a garden."

That's just what it was. From his own garden, Bill had taken corn, squash, carrots, pumpkins, tomatoes, beans, apples. But the corn was in its green sheath on a five-foot stalk. The squash and the pumpkins were "growing" on vines he had pulled up by the roots. The beans, the tomatoes were on whole plants. Even the apples had to be picked off limbs Bill had cut from his apple tree.

At the first word that the editor's son was ill, Bill had scratched the name "Hi" on the dark-green surface of a growing squash. As the squash grew, the letters had swollen and hardened. When



Hi looked at the "garden," he found a squash with his own name embossed on the side. He stared at it in wonder. "How did he do it?" he asked again and again. "Just how in the world did he do it?"

Both Ed and I were aware of the possibility that Johnny might contract polio, too, and had talked to the doctor about it. If he was going to contract it, we would know a week to ten days after Hiram had had a fever.

Ed and I needed no calendar to tell us how many days had passed. On the seventh day after Hi's first fever we began counting time by hours.

On the eighth day, Johnny complained of a headache. By nightfall he had a little fever. The next morning it had gone up to 102 degrees. "Mama, I got an awful headache," he said.

Another report to the health department, another week of waiting. If Johnny was to be crippled, it would show up in a week's time.

A cheerful, aggressive salesman from the Linotype company came through Snoqualmie that week. He found Ed in the dark corner which served as a private office.

"This is the day!" the salesman began. "Yes, sir, this is the day I'm going to see that you get the one thing you need in the world!"

Ed looked up. He had been staring at some bills without seeing them. "What is that?" he asked mechanically.

"A new Linotype!"

Ed looked back at the papers under his hand. "What I need," he said, "is courage."

"Ha! What kind of talk is that?" The salesman laughed heartily. "You're the fellow has so much courage all the other weekly publishers think you're nuts. You're expanding. You're going places. That's why you need a new Linotype, a machine that will —"

Ed said simply, "Jim, I have two boys. They both have polio."

The salesman froze. The next hearty laugh, already rising in his throat, ended. "Sorry," he said at last, and his voice was husky. "I talk so much I never know when to shut up. I'll come back another time."

Ed said, "Jim, I didn't mean to be rude."

"Why shouldn't you be?" The salesman had walked away, but

now he turned back. "It's true about your having courage. You always had it. Don't let go of it now."

The long week of waiting passed, and when the doctor examined Johnny he found no stiffness, no limp of any kind.

By then, on the doctor's advice, we had taken Hi to the Children's Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle. Neither Hi nor Johnny knew they had had polio. "Orthopedic Hospital" meant "sick and crippled children." What would Hi's reaction be?

He was curious, and that helped. But he said defensively, "I'm not crippled!" and he made us promise we wouldn't tell anyone at school where he was going. Once at the hospital he was cheerful, and amused by the angel robe the nurse instructed him to get into. He grinned at me. "I'm sure glad none of the kids at school can see me," he said, "wearing this funny dress."

We still worried, though, about what his reaction would be to learning that he had had polio until Hiram himself reassured us. The day we took him home, he referred so freely to his leg and to the "kids" with polio who had been his playmates that Ed asked, "Hi, did they find out what kind of sickness you had?"

"Oh, yes . . ." Hi did not look at us as he answered. "I had polio. But it was a *slight* case, Daddy, a very *slight* case."

Johnny returned to school, but for weeks Hiram stayed at home. Gradually the injured leg grew stronger. By Thanksgiving we could see that we would not have to settle for a "slight limp," but that Hiram could play football, after all. Finally, he was strong enough for school. I talked to his teacher beforehand: "He has said over and over again that he doesn't want any of the kids to know where he's been or that he had polio."

The teacher said, "I'll talk to the children. You have no idea how understanding seven- and eight-year-olds can be."

When Hi went back to school, he went down the corridor leading to his classroom with a determined stride, trying desperately to control his limp. The boys and girls spilled out of the room. "Hi, Hiram!" they sang out. "Hi, Hi!"

Hi blurted out, loud and clear, "I had polio but I bet you wouldn't even know it because I'm not crippled at all. See?"

The teacher smiled at me over the children's heads.

"MONEY isn't everything," a not very original friend on the old *Chicago Times* once remarked, to which Tom Howard, the chief photographer, retorted, "You're absolutely right. Health is one percent." But when we approached our third Thanksgiving as small businessmen, it was health for which we were most thankful.

Thanksgiving morning the four of us lingered at the breakfast table and Ed called to order one of our periodic family meetings. "I'd like to have a discussion," he said, "about what we have to be thankful for. Johnny?"

Six-year-old Johnny rolled his eyes to the ceiling, finally intoned solemnly, "I'm thankful Mrs. Gallanar never makes me stay after school."

"Hiram?"

"Can I be thankful for two things?"

Johnny burst out, "Hi, that isn't fair! I was only thankful once!"

Ed raised a hand. "Order!"

"It seems to me," Hi began carefully, "that what all us kids have to be thankful for is Thanksgiving itself. You get a special big dinner and you don't have to go to school." He turned to his brother. "Look, John, you have that thankful as much as I do."

"Oh, all right. Take another thankful, then, Hiram."

"I'm thankful I didn't have that bad kind of polio," Hi said in a small, small voice.

For a moment none of us said anything. Then Ed cleared his throat loudly. "I'm thankful for something. Anyone know what it is? . . . Give up?"

Hi and Johnny nodded, and Ed said, "All right, I'll tell you. I'm thankful because I can spend all day Thanksgiving thinking about what I have to be thankful for."

"You're not going to work at the shop at all?"

Ed grinned. "I could. There's plenty to do. But I won't."

Hi said soberly, "Dad, does that mean things are better than they used to be?"

Ed looked thoughtfully at our eight-year-old son. "Yes," he said, "it does. We've got good workers and we've got a big new press and it's sure to keep running. Now, you run along and play."

The boys jumped up and headed for their rooms.

I gave Ed a rueful smile. "Do you mean what you said?"

"Sure, I mean it! Every month we have more subscribers and fewer creditors."

"Remember Ote Sloan? He said it took five years to prove you were here to stay."

Ed shrugged. "No law against doing it in three. We're in debt, I know. But we *are* paying everything off, little by little. As long as business comes in, and we have the men and equipment to do the job, we're bound to come out all right, in time."

"But if . . ." I stopped short, ashamed of myself for beating the drums of gloom on Thanksgiving Day. What if there were a strike at the lumber mill? my frightened little mind whispered. What if our printers left?

Less than a year had passed since Ed had been half carried to the hospital, and it had been a hard year.

THE NEXT summer, Ed and I decided to send Hi to the YMCA camp on Orcas Island for a week in August.

Hi lost his heart to the idea when we told him, but we didn't want him to think that good things come easy, especially if he was to own his own business someday, so we said, "The week at Camp Orkila will cost twenty-five dollars. We'll pay half of that, but if you really want to go you'll earn the other half."

There are not a great many ways in which an eight-year-old can earn \$12.50, and we didn't suggest any. It was Hi who heard that the berry farm down the road needed pickers and it was Hi alone who walked to the farm and applied for the job.

"You're two years below the age limit," the owner said, "but I'll try you for one day. If you can pick clean as the grownups and don't fool around, you can come back again."

At the end of three days, Hi had earned \$2.50. The next day it rained. "They don't pick in the rain," the little boy cried. "How am I going to get enough money for camp?"

Ed said, "Why don't you go out and sell *Record* subscriptions?"

"Oh, could I, Dad, honest? Would you let me, Dad, honest?"

Reversing our previous stand about not paying the boys for

work in the shop, Ed said, "I'll pay you seventy-five cents commission for every new subscription you get."

So the next morning Hi set out. He had a receipt book and a pencil in one overalls pocket, a big scratch-pad in the other, and an armload of *Records*. A brown paper sack containing his lunch hung from his belt, secured by a big safety pin. In his head was a sales pitch he had worked out himself. Ring the doorbell. You don't take the paper? Here, let me show you one, because if you see it you'll want to subscribe. You do take the paper? Then how about a gift subscription for someone else?

I never saw my small son in action, because every morning I took him to the end of some country road and drove away. He walked all day. When the big round aluminum watch he carried said five o'clock, he asked at the nearest house to use the telephone. He called the *Record* and I'd drive out and pick him up.

In the morning, he cut quite a figure as a salesman. His step was firm and his smile, over the top of his armload of papers, was confident. By five o'clock he was a tired, dusty little boy. Some people had fed him cookies, others had shut the door in his face. But he never came home without at least one new subscription and soon he was asking, "If I earn more than half the money, do I have to pay more than half?"

When the magic day came, Johnny and I took Hiram into Seattle to catch the bus for camp. He was fully equipped: blanket roll, suitcase, and an old Girl Scout mess kit which he held upside down so no one would see the insignia. He had five dollars spending money in his jeans, and he had earned every penny of it. At the very last moment when the bus driver started up the motor, his face appeared at an open window and he called down to little Johnny. "You do my work for me at the shop," he said — and was there a bit of wistfulness in his voice? — "and I'll use half my spending money to buy something at camp for you."

His head disappeared into the boyful, joyful interior, and the bus pulled away.

EVERY MONTH now we were gaining new readers. In one three-month period eighty-six new subscriptions had come in, all un-

solicited since, except for Hiram's drive, we never held any kind of campaign. Almost every week advertising revenue was higher than it had been the corresponding month of the previous year. In short, business was good.

Then the main gear of the big newspaper press, our beautiful, big, black three-thousand-dollar baby, snapped.

It had been years since parts for that make of press had been manufactured. Yet here it was Monday morning, and on Tuesday morning we had to start printing the paper.

"We could arrange to print it on someone else's press," our foreman suggested.

Ed said grimly, "We'll print it on our own."

Sheer stubbornness supported him for the next twenty-four hours. He drove two hundred and forty miles to get the gear repaired and by ten o'clock Tuesday morning the press was running as usual.

The foreman at the shop where Ed had taken the gear had looked at him curiously. "You're knocking yourself out over this. Who do you work for, anyway?"

"Myself," Ed had replied tersely.

When the press crisis was past, I began to drop hints again that it was time to remember the doctor's orders to relax, for Ed was once more wound up like a wire spring. But every hint I dropped seemed to land with a loud crash. When I asked him not to bring home armloads of work, and please to come home at a reasonable hour, my anxiety showed through and I was as subtle as a fast right to the jaw. I always started out "suggesting" and ended up nagging:

"Remember what the doctor said? You *have* to cut down. You are deliberately ignoring doctor's orders. . . ."

"The doctor didn't explain how I was to get the work done in less time. Besides, I'm healthy as a horse."

Naturally these "discussions" contributed less than nothing to Ed's peace of mind. The more nervous he became, the more I worried and the louder I said, "Stop being nervous!"

Then, for a few months I tried being a serene "good sport." Instead of waving "doctor's orders" in my husband's face, I said simply, "You're the boss, dear. Whatever you do is all right with

me." For though Ed worked more than was good for him and came home late, the way I had been helping him back to health would soon have discouraged him from coming home at all.

In April, the death of a friend from a heart attack filled me with cold fear. What was I doing, standing by cheerfully while Ed dug his own grave? Unless he changed his pattern of day-to-day living, he would surely suffer a second heart attack, and, if that didn't kill him, then the third or the fourth one would. It wasn't a matter of being a "good sport." It was a question of saving my husband's life. I wanted Ed to be happy but, much more than that, I wanted him to live. If he wouldn't follow doctor's orders, I would force him to.

For a month I stuck with it. If Ed was late for supper, I telephoned the shop and insisted he come right home. I threw so many phrases at him like "for my sake" or "if you won't think of yourself, then do it for the kids" that I managed to extract several promises from him. But if the laissez-faire attitude was a poor way to keep your husband alive, subjecting him to a constant fire of "don'ts" was surely worse. What then? What *could* I do?

One day Ed came home from the shop early. He came into the house quietly, and his hands were empty of work. He threw me a weak grin and a quick hello, and went right past me to the bedroom. He was lying down when I came in, and he was flat on his back, staring at the ceiling.

"Are you all right?" I asked anxiously.

He nodded. "Just tired."

His face was gray.

"Hungry?"

"No. I just want to lie here for a while."

I turned to go. Ed's voice, with a funny restrained sound to it, called me back. "I probably ought to tell you. We don't have a Linotype operator any more."

"What!"

"Today was Olga's last day at the shop. Her husband wants her at home." He added wearily, "And I don't think there's an unemployed Linotype operator in the state of Washington."

I wanted to comfort him but I couldn't say empty Pollyanna

phrases. Slowly, slowly, we had pulled ourselves forward, keeping up payments, improving the business, winning over our critics. I might cry, "Oh, I'm so tired!" but Ed's courage was indestructible. Ed *must* have courage; so much courage he would have it to spare when I lost mine. Ed without spirit, Ed heartsick and ill — what was the use of all we'd done, if to win the fight we were losing something so much bigger? He lay so still I thought he might have fallen asleep. I tiptoed to the window and reached up to pull the curtain.

"No," Ed said. "I don't want to sleep. Come and sit here beside me. I want to talk to you . . . about the shop. There's a lot about running a small business which you don't know. You should begin studying up, so that you could run the business without me if you had to."

"There's no need to discuss any such thing!" I cried it like a scared child.

"We never know. I'm older than you are."

"But it will be years and years before . . ." My voice trailed off, caught somewhere behind a lump of fear.

Ed said gently, "There's a big scratch-pad and pencil in that drawer there. There are some things I'd like you to write down. Please, darling."

I groped for the pad and pencil. "I wouldn't want to keep the business, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with it . . ." and added, choking on it, "without you."

Ed said, "Remember what we used to say, that it was a family business, that all four of us were in it together?"

"Yes, yes. . . ."

Ed touched my hand. "Then it would be up to you to keep the paper going until the boys were old enough to take over."

He hesitated a moment, but I could not speak. He patted my hand, and began matter-of-factly, "First, the matter of insurance . . ."

Slowly, I began to write.

SURELY heaven's board of directors includes a vice-president in charge of those fools who say, We'll buy a little business all our

own. About June 1, 1952, this worthy looked down and mused, "There's that silly couple in Snoqualmie again. Better let them come up for air." And so he took his celestial foot off our necks and things got better.

By the end of the week, we had found a Linotype operator. He said his name was Ray Darrow. We didn't ask why he had left his last job, or anything else about him. I simply said a little silent prayer that now Ed would truly relax and stay well and that I could cease being such a darned fool about the way I tried to help him do it. Once I had thought I could save his life, but now I knew the most I could do was help him save it himself. But how?

Help came, most unexpectedly. I was in the grocery store, contemplating a shelf of canned goods but frowning mightily because I had just been thinking about Ed. The doctor's wife came by, pushed her shopping cart next to mine and exclaimed, "My, what a worried look. Did you leave your grocery list at home?"

There are moments when one's private mind is so full the gentlest tap brings the contents flooding out. The doctor's wife had six children, and I hope she wasn't in a hurry to get home to them, because her greeting and her sweet face made me want to tell her things, and, praises be, I told them all!

When I finally came to a breathless halt, she was smiling sympathetically. "I understand very well. There must be hundreds of thousands of wives in the same spot you're in. I don't think you were 'all wrong' when you were concentrating on making Ed's life pleasant. An overtired, nervous man needs a peaceful home. You weren't 'all wrong,' either, when you tried to force him to follow doctor's orders. You would be foolish to pretend, as Ed is pretending, that he doesn't need to. But you can't force a man to give up one way of living. All you can do is offer another way of living — and make it so attractive he'll adopt it voluntarily."

"How?" I exclaimed. "It sounds fine, but impossible."

She smiled. "A wife has to be clever," she said softly.

For days my head throbbed with good intentions. Slowly these truths emerged. First of all, I had been talking about Ed's "way of life" as if it were entirely separate from my own. "You've got to learn to relax," was the order I handed him twice daily, like a

pill. But how relaxed was the atmosphere I created at home? Ironing, vacuuming, cleaning the closets, doing the washing—I saved all these chores for Sundays and evenings and I went at them like a slap-happy prize fighter. I enjoyed it. It was a change from the sedentary “thinking” kind of job I had all day at my typewriter. But what was I contributing to my tense husband’s peace of mind by filling his quiet moments at home with the swish, roar, kerthump and bang of every electrical appliance in the house?

The worst of it was that I had been so proud of myself. Flattered by the exclamations of friends, “My, I don’t see how you get so much done, and you write books, *too!*” I had failed to see that anyone can “get so much done” if getting it done is more important than the wear and tear on the family.

The Sunday following my talk with the doctor’s wife I resolved not to do a single bit of housework, even though the sight of the laundry basket made me quiver, and my left hand had to keep my right hand from reaching for the dust mop. During Sunday breakfast there had usually been little conversation because I had been busy drawing up a list of jobs for that day. The moment I downed eggs and bacon, I jumped up from the table and began to do the dishes. At that Ed would go into the living room to a pile of office work. “Why, you didn’t even finish your coffee!” I would scold, partly because I knew he should relax but more particularly because I wanted to wash the cup.

The day of rest would henceforth start off with a leisurely, old-fashioned breakfast, and this first Sunday of my resolve began that way. It was a peaceful meal; long after the food was gone, we talked. I reheated the coffee, filled our cups and we talked some more. Suddenly Ed burst out, “Great guns, we’ve been sitting here for an hour and a half!” He looked at me apologetically. “Have I been keeping you? . . .”

“No, no,” I said quickly, repressing the urge to begin tidying up in all directions. “There’s nothing I have to get to right this minute.” It was the utter truth. We hadn’t run out of clean clothes or dishes, and why was a little dust under the bed insupportable on Sunday when it hadn’t been hurting us all week?

“Good,” Ed said contentedly. “We have so little chance to talk.”

Later that day Ed brought out the forbidden office work, and the word "Don't!" rose in my throat automatically. Somehow I managed to swallow it whole. It was a gray, rainy afternoon. Why shouldn't he work at home for an hour or two, unless I had something better to suggest? So I tried to think of something. I couldn't. My imagination (and wasn't that what the doctor's wife had meant by "being clever"?) was rusty from disuse.

I had substituted rules: "Let's make a rule you never go to the shop on Sunday." But no matter how bright and sunny his easy Friday afternoon might be, it had never occurred to me to drop whatever I was doing and say, "Come on, let's quit work and go for a hike." Why? Because to me Friday had always been a work-day. I would have to do better.

It was a warm July afternoon when I sent this particular resolution on its solo flight. Work on my novel was going at top speed but about midafternoon I pushed back the smoking typewriter and drove to the shop. Ed was at his desk, frowning over a stack of invoices.

"Would you take me out to the golf course and teach me how to play golf?" There, it was out.

Ed looked astonished. "Why, I . . . well, of course I've always wished you would take up golf." He had spoken about it again and again, but I'd always shrugged off the suggestion. I had not seen how rare and wonderful was the husband who actually wanted his wife with him even on the golf course.

Now Ed shook his head. "I've got to finish this stuff today."

"Throw it in the car and we'll take it home with us," I said, though the old, worried wife was reeling at what the new, clever wife was saying. "I'll help you tonight after supper."

"Well, I don't know. . . ." But he followed me out and soon we were on the first tee and I was holding one of Ed's clubs and Ed was saying, "No, hands a little closer together, that's it. Now, here, get the feel of that club, it's like a pendulum. . . ."

He was out in the fresh air, he looked as happy as a kid at Christmas and he was following doctor's orders! I hardly heard what he was telling me, but I think it was something like, "Look, honey, the important thing is, you got to relax!"

I found that every day contained moments of relaxation, if we slowed down enough to see them. In the course of making business calls, Ed and I sometimes passed the grade school during recess. One day I said boldly, "Let's stop and watch the baseball game. That's Johnny at second base, and Hi is fielding. . . ."

Ed looked at me oddly. "We've got to get back to the shop. We're late already."

"That's silly! The recess lasts only fifteen minutes."

Ed grinned. "I know it's silly. I was just repeating what you said to me a few months ago when *I* suggested we stop."

"Oh." It was a small "Oh," too.

"Look at the arm on that kid!" Ed burst out. "Say, that was a nice catch Hi made, too. I think I'll start practicing with the boys. Evenings, for a half an hour. Sunday afternoons . . ."

Ed and I got more out of that recess than the youngsters did. Fifteen minutes thinking about our children and baseball, instead of a difficult printing order. It was as good as an hour's nap. "Let's do this again," Ed said as we drove away, and we have, many times.

It is possible to be well and happy, even if you own your own business. The answer, not only for Ed but for every other bread-winner, lies not in getting away from it all but in learning to go through the ordinary workday without twitching nerves or pounding heart.



ONE AFTERNOON Mr. Hall, the banker across the street, dropped in at the office. He went back into the shop, surveyed the machin-

ery, then walked into the new wing we had recently added with the bank's help and observed, "Concrete blocks, eh? Cement floor . . . fireproof . . . mmm . . ." Ed stayed by his side and answered all his questions, but he finally quipped, "Well, when do you foreclose?"

Mr. Hall's blue eyes twinkled, but his voice was solemn. "Nothing like that, Ed," he said. "I came over to tell you not to worry. I know what you already owe and I know how much cash you've got left. I can see you've got a program worked out in your mind, and it's good for the whole Valley. So you figure out how much money you're going to need to carry it out, and then come see us. We'll have it for you." He looked thoughtfully at Ed. "You've been here three years. Only three years." He shook his head. Then this man, who had built one little bank into a system of seven, added: "I could never have done what you've done in only three years."

Three years ago, we had been that couple from Chicago. Today, well, there was Mr. Hall, grinning and waving as he walked back to the bank, and his last words to Ed were, "Now remember, Eddie, we don't want you to worry."

HIRAM was nine years old that winter. One evening he was bubbling over with an incident at school. His teacher had been locked in her classroom, and Hi and one or two other third-grade muscle men had been called upon to get her out.

"Couldn't we put something about it in the paper?" Hi asked his father. "My teacher would sure be surprised."

It was then an idea came to Ed which proved to be pure inspiration. "Hi, I wonder . . ." He studied the little boy's solemn face and big brown eyes. "Would you like to write for the paper if you had to do it every single week?"

The brown eyes widened. "Gee," Hi exclaimed softly.

"You'd have to sit down with Mama or me, and dictate the things you want to say because it would be a lot of writing, even for a third-grader. You couldn't be silly, and you couldn't skip a week just because you didn't feel like writing."

Hi nodded eagerly. Ed grinned. "All right," he said, "let's sit down and have a family discussion."

So the four of us took our places at the kitchen table. Because of a column of birth announcements called The Tri-Corner, it was unanimously decided to name Hi's column The Hi-Corner. Monday night would be dictating night. Subject matter would be up to Hi. Johnny would be his leg man, keeping his ear to the ground for newsworthy items. Ed outlined the fundamentals of journalism as they affected a nine-year-old: be brief (he explained at length); include as many names as possible; choose subjects of interest to the greatest number of readers.

"How about me?" little Johnny piped up. "It just seems like I don't do enough work for the paper."

"Johnny darling, you sort out leads and slugs, and you sweep out from under the Linotype, and you stamp the dates onto the cuts. . . ." I tried very hard to match the little boy's solemnity. "You are a printer, like your father. Hi and I are only writers, not half as important as you."

"Really, Mama?" He was delighted. He threw himself into his father's arms, and the printers left the room while the writers got together for the first Hi-Corner ever composed.

"While walking from lunch at the North Bend grade school last Friday . . ." Hi began.

By the end of four weeks Hi had raked in more fan mail than Ed and I had received in four years. A few weeks before an election in Snoqualmie, one of the councilmen telephoned. "I'm a candidate for re-election," he explained, "and I'd like to put my views before the public. Could I be interviewed for an article in the *Record*?"

"Why, sure," Ed replied. "I'll be glad to talk with you."

"Who said I wanted to talk to *you*?" the city father retorted. "I want Hi to interview me for his column. Then I know everyone will read it."

What to write and how to write it — Hi faced that problem every Monday night and, by solving it, learned a little each week about good taste and editorial judgment. He suffered all the agonies of his literary betters when it came to thinking up the first sentence. He frowned, licked his lips, sighed. There were always several false starts. "Now don't put this down, just let me say it so I can see how it sounds. . . ." When the column was complete, he read it

through carefully, and even if Ed or I had been silly enough to change a word or phrase we wouldn't have gotten away with it. As Hi put it: "We tell everybody that I write the column myself. If you change anything, then it wouldn't be true any more." The truth, of course, is that if we had changed anything it also wouldn't have been good any more.

Most popular of all Hi-Corners have been Hi's editorials. His column at Thanksgiving was a nine-year-old's credo:

I am thankful to live in America because it is a country that you can live in half decent. Most other countries are a lot poorer.

I am thankful to have a mother and father. In Korea kids don't have mothers and fathers very often.

I am thankful to be able to believe in whatever religion you are in. In other countries that isn't possible.

I am thankful to be able to have playmates and other activities, such as Cub Scouts.

I am thankful to have a brother. Kids that have brothers and sisters will always have somebody to play with.

HIRAM and Johnny were five and four years old when they got their first taste of country journalism by licking two thousand postage stamps. As junior partners they gradually worked their way into the circulation department (selling subscriptions), the mailing department (wrapping papers and carrying them to the post office), the mechanical department (sorting out leads and slugs) and the editorial department (Hi's weekly column). By the spring of 1954 our pint-sized journeymen were ready to invade a new field — commercial printing.

Ed had been teaching them to sort out the individual letters of hand-set type and distribute them properly in the drawer. "All these letters," eight-year-old Johnny mused, searching for the B bin. "I wish I had some."

"If we did, we could be printers, too," his ten-year-old brother agreed, and thus was born the North Bend Printers, Ink.

Ed turned over to our competitors an old hand press, a proof press, and a fine collection of damaged and obsolete type, two

printer's aprons, a tin of printer's ink and free access to the shelf of scrap paper.

The first week of April, the North Bend Printers, Ink. placed their first ad in the *Record*:

WE'RE ADVERTISING

To People Who Want
Cheep Printing

My brother John an i got a printing Press free and
we can chisel some cards and paper from the falls printing
Company and that way we can print cheeper.

— If you Want printing dOne cheep we're the kids
that can do it. No payroll, free materials,
no overhead, nO taxes.

WE GOT A RACKET

Hi Groshell

North Bend Printers, Ink. Call 88-1503

When Ed told them they had to pay for their ad they accepted this without argument but also without any noticeable enthusiasm:

"How much?" Hi asked, eyes narrowed.

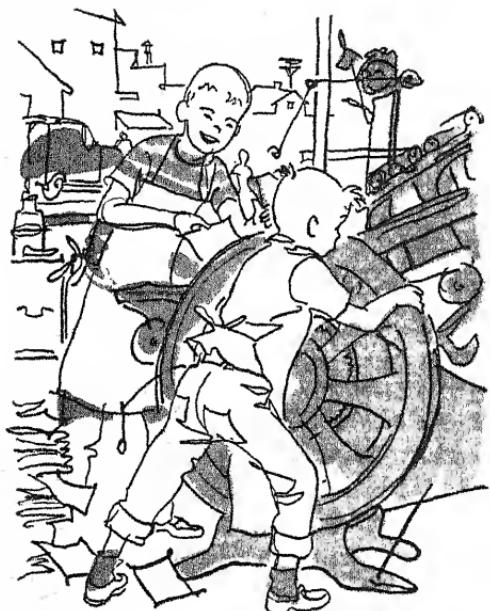
Ed calculated quickly. "Thirty-six column inches. Multiply that by seventy-seven cents an inch . . ."

The little boys responded like advertisers of all time. "I'm going to get a ruler and measure it myself," said our canny eight-year-old, and his brother said, "Let's make that ad a little smaller."

They received their first job the night the ad appeared. A reader ordered a hundred handbills. "I figured on spending one dollar," she said. "And I would like you boys to distribute them, too."

Instinct inherited from some relative other than his father took possession of our small son. "We'd have to charge more than that," Hi said solemnly, "because there is the labor of us two partners and there is materials, too. We will do it for a dollar and a half."

This was the bid that got the job. It took the boys two hours to set the type. Then they ran the press but, since smashed fingers



are one emblem of the trade we felt they were too young to acquire, we did not connect the motor. One boy turned the big wheel while the other slid the sheet of paper in and out of the press. They were grinning through a veritable blackface of printer's ink by the time they were through.

The founding of North Bend Printers, Ink. did not mean that our star columnist stopped writing, and when Ed brought home

an ancient typewriter Hi began typing his column himself.

"I'll give you a twenty-five-dollar savings bond if you type your next four columns," Ed offered.

Hi had never been paid for The Hi-Corner. "Sure, Dad, sure!" he agreed, and little John breathed, "Gosh, how rich can you get?"

Hi spent an hour and a half typing each column, but he earned his defense bond. It was his first real pay check. "Just bring the bond home and let me look at it," he asked, "before you lock it up in the bank."

Hard on the heels of this big moment came recognition of another kind. The Washington State Press Club notified us that The Hi-Corner had been awarded a prize in the annual newspaper contest and that the writer should be present at the Awards Banquet in Seattle to receive it. It was the first time that a child had taken an award. It was probably the first time, also, that a child attended the Awards Banquet.

Both Hi and his partner, John, went with us, though neither of them knew Hi was to receive an award. They sat up stiffly at the

banquet table, both tense with the responsibility of doing the right thing in this roomful of two hundred confident grownups. Their clothing worried them. I had stripped them of blue jeans and sweat shirts and encased them in gabardine slacks and tweed sports jackets, the first they had ever owned.

When food was served, Hi whispered, "Mama, shouldn't I take off my jacket?"

"No, leave it on, Hi."

"But, Mama, are all these men going to eat supper with their coats on?"

No need describing the moment when the chairman of the Awards Committee arose and in the presence of the best newspapermen in the state read a section of one of Hi's columns and presented the award. Hi stood up, walked to the head table, shook hands and, with a look of wonder on his face I had never seen the equal of, returned to his chair. There was more of it — a lot of applause, for one thing — but I was finding it a little blurry.

Ed reached for my hand, and squeezed it hard. "Our small partners are growing up, Mother, they're growing up."

THAT NEXT summer even I was beginning to say that everything had happened to us that could happen, and that the worst could never happen again. We finally had a good man in the back shop, a printer who was there to stay. My new book was selling like hot cakes, the printing business was good, and we were no longer haunted by the question, Can we make the mortgage payments this month?

I really believed our troubles were behind us as we approached the end of our first five years of business for ourselves. In October the magic line would be crossed and, as our friend had prophesied: "After that, they'll have to shoot you to get rid of you."

The people of our Valley will remember the summer of 1954 for two reasons. It was so cold, rainy and sunless that at least one person quipped, "Nice warm winter we're having this summer." And there was a strike.

This was the lumber strike that paralyzed the entire Pacific Northwest from June 21 until fall. In our Valley it idled 845 men.

We always had known that a strike at the big mill in Snoqualmie Falls was disaster for the local businessmen. Not only for the grocer and the owner of the hardware store, but for us.

Monday morning, June 21, the mill whistle did not blow. The silence was an eloquent retort to my feeling that we'd already had every kind of trouble a couple with a small business can have. Where could we find revenue to keep the newspaper going during a strike? Would it all come back, the desperation over money, the almost hourly struggle at the shop?

That afternoon Ed called our employes together. "You people know what it's like during a lumber strike," he said, "and you know what happens to a small business like ours. So you're probably wondering what's ahead. I want to tell you. Right now we've got the best staff in the world, and the best little old newspaper in the world, and this strike isn't going to break up either one of them. I may have to go out and sell printing like I never sold it before, but we're going to put out a paper every week and you're going to have jobs at no cut in hours or wages."

There was relief on many faces, but it didn't touch the relief that flooded through me. Ed was less nervous than he is about selecting a necktie. We had weathered every crisis. We could weather just one more. I hadn't counted on the one after that.

Our Linotype operator, Ray Darrow, left town. We were left with the old question — how were we going to get the paper out?

I worked at home that Monday, and it wasn't until suppertime that I telephoned the shop and the receptionist, in fearful whispers, told me what had happened. I sat down at the kitchen table and put my head in my hands. This was too much. I remembered the advice an old man had given Ed when he was a teen-ager in Billings, Montana: "If you're in a fight, and the other guy knocks you down, you can figure it was because you weren't ready for him. Get up quick, and if he knocks you down again you can figure it was a lucky punch. So you get up once more. But if he knocks you down a third time, stay down. If you don't, you're going to get your fool block knocked off — and what's the sense of that?"

And what was the sense to this? I could visualize Ed, pacing the floor, calling long distance, leafing nervously through aged

and yellowing letters of application. Was this the Sunday punch, the blow that was one more than a man can take?

I called Hi and John into the kitchen. "Boys, you have never cooked your own supper," I said, "but, Hi, you're ten years old and, Johnny, you're almost nine. Do you think you could do it?"

"Mama, honest, would you let us?"

"Here's the meat," I said, "and here's the potatoes. You'll find lettuce and tomatoes in the refrigerator. John, take a box of pudding off the shelf and mix a dessert. I'm going down to the shop. I'll be back soon." I hurried out and drove to the shop.

By then I was convinced I'd find Ed in such a state of nerves that the only question would be whether to call the doctor. But when I entered the print shop the first sound that greeted me was not my darling's hoarse cries but the cheery clatter of a Linotype *in use*. Scarcely breathing, I approached the wonderful sound.

The man at the Linotype was Ed. Slowly his fingers moved on the keys, there was the click as the mats were lifted, the rapid *tat tat tat* as they dropped, the faint metallic clunk as the line of type dropped neatly into place. If ever I saw a man who was neither nervous nor frightened, it was Ed.

"Hi, there!" he called to me. "I've been setting type all day. Look — I finished three galleys." Three galleys — our last operator's output in an hour and a half, but then, had I ever seen that last operator with such a wide and happy grin?

"I just heard," I blurted out. "What are you going to do?"

Ed grinned. "Pray constantly and shave once a day."

"But the paper! Today's Monday. You'll be sitting in front of this machine twenty-four hours a day. You can't . . ."

"I'm hungry," he said, unconscious of the voice of doom sounding off at his elbow. "Let's go home and have supper."

It was only six o'clock. We *never* had supper at six o'clock when we were having a Crisis.

"Supper, yes, supper," I repeated doltishly.

Ed turned off the machine, rose briskly, rubbed his hands together. "What are we having?"

"We'll have to ask the children. . . ." I said weakly.

We drove home together, and Ed was singing all the way.

THIS IS a success story, though it has to be a story without an ending, because living happily ever after goes on and on. The strike ended. We found another Linotype operator.

One day last month we passed a landmark: our two small partners received their social-security cards. The boys were at the shop and we shook hands all around, and there was good deal of kissing and congratulating, too. It was a wonderful moment, but suddenly Ed's face took on a wondering look.

"What is it?" I demanded.

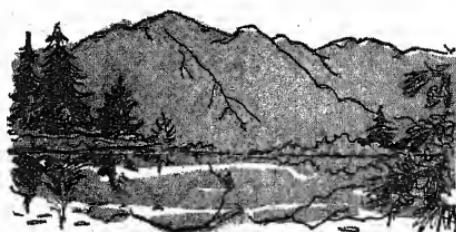
"Don't you know what date it is today?"

I looked at the calendar. "October first, but there's nothing special about . . ." I stopped. October first. On that date, five years before, we had left monthly salaries and security and made the awful plunge. Our fifth anniversary, and we didn't even think of it! Ote Sloan had said: "If you're still here in five years — boy, they'll have to shoot you to get you out."

In those five years we had had problems. But we had learned that success does not come to the man who has no problems. If nothing ever goes wrong, the chances are nothing ever goes at all, for action brings problems as surely as planting potatoes brings bugs. The man of spirit goes after the bugs, he doesn't quit planting potatoes.

And so, on that October first, a small businessman and his wife fell into each other's arms, and that's where we stayed for quite some time, while a ten-year-old columnist and a nine-year-old printer kept tugging at us and asking:

"Mama, Daddy. Why did you yell like that, 'We made it!'"



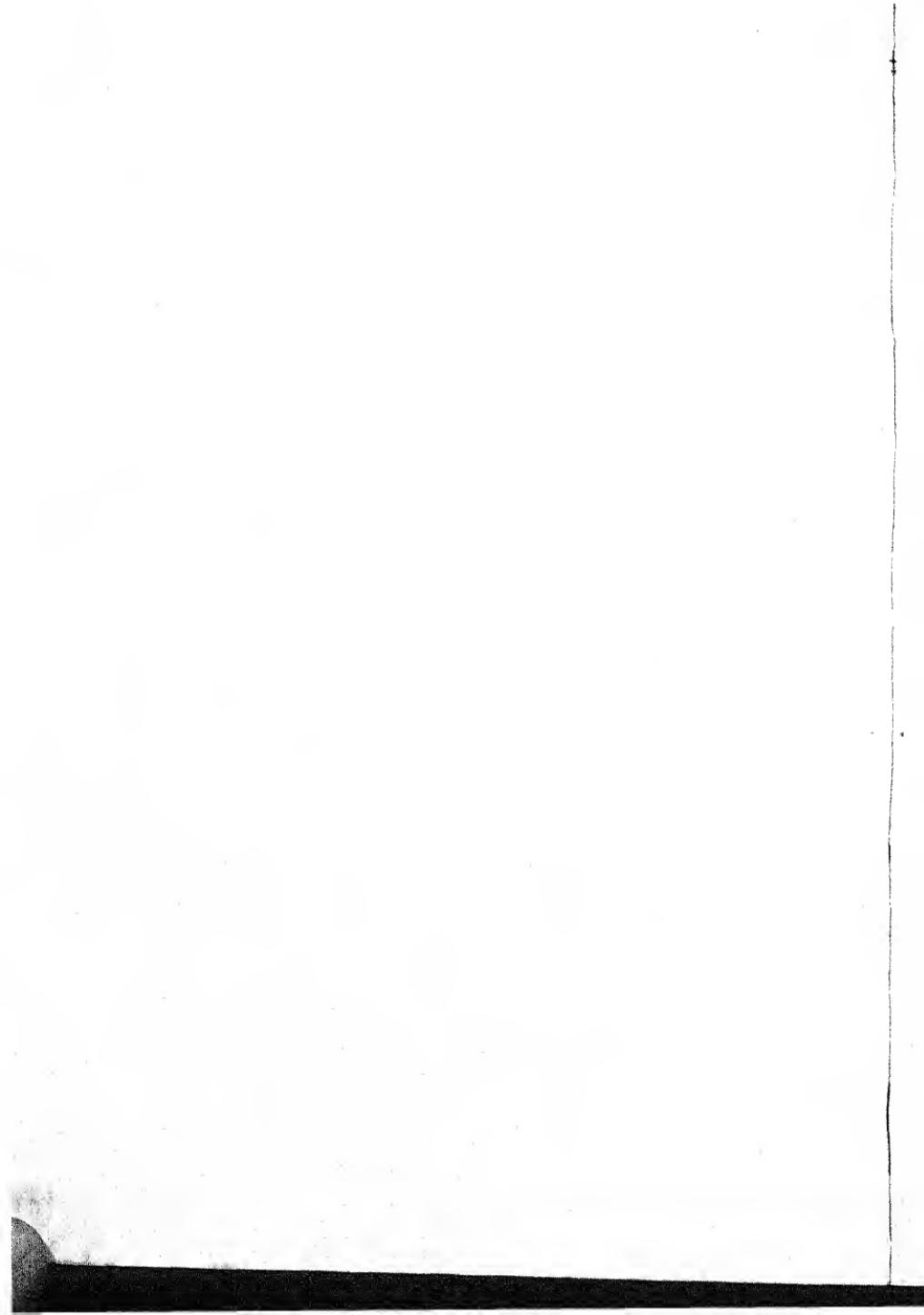


Charlotte Paul

BORN and reared in the Pacific Northwest, Charlotte Paul studied music in Germany and traveled extensively in Europe before entering Wellesley. While in college she won first prize in *The Atlantic Monthly* collegiate short-story contest of 1937. Soon after graduation she became assistant foreign-news editor of the Chicago *Daily Times* and later roving editor in the Caribbean.

Returning to the United States, she began a successful career of free-lance writing which continued after her marriage to newspaperman Ed Groshell. She has sold articles and stories to many of the leading magazines and published two novels—*Hear My Heart Speak* in 1950, and *Gold Mountain* in 1953.

Busy as she is with writing, her two sons and the family-owned newspaper in Snoqualmie, Washington, she still finds time to play golf with her husband, to write songs for the local amateur shows and to work in her garden.



THE LONG
RIDE HOME

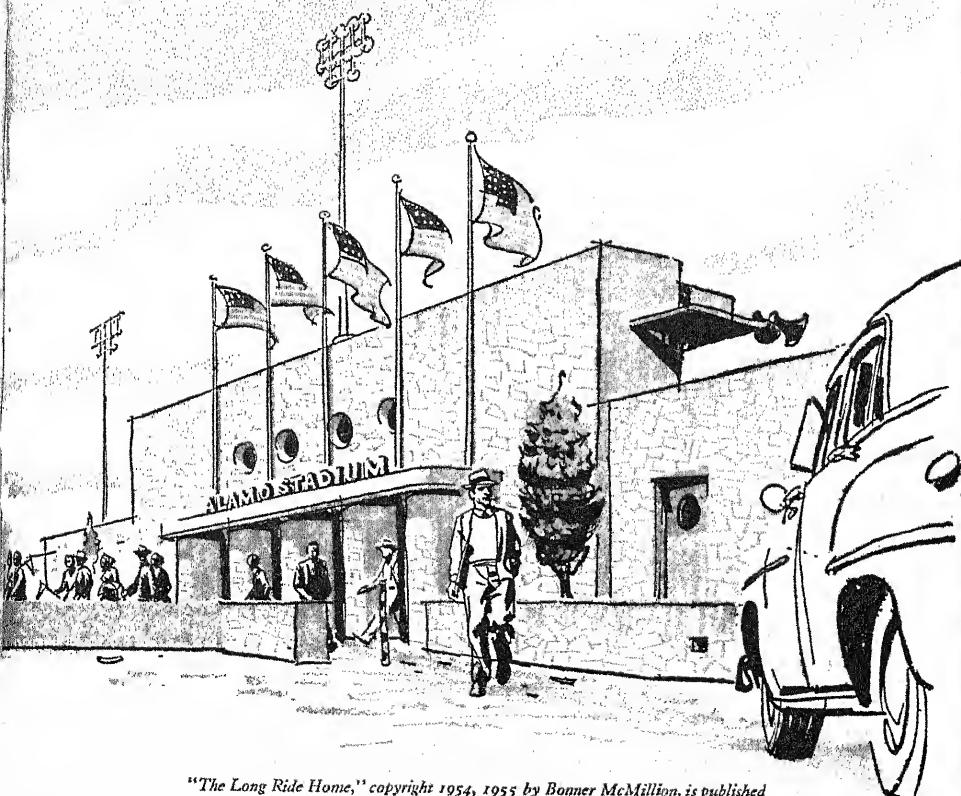
THE LONG



Illustrations by Ed Vebell

RIDE HOME

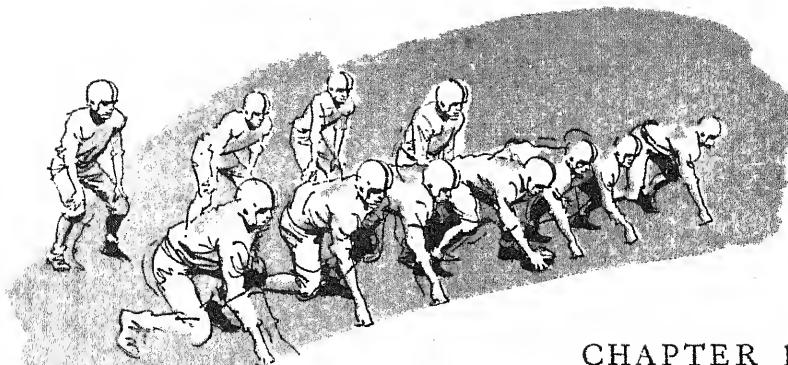
A condensation of the book by
BONNER McMILLION



"The Long Ride Home," copyright 1954, 1955 by Bonner McMillion, is published at \$2.95 by J. B. Lippincott Co., E. Washington Square, Philadelphia 5, Pa.

HEY called him "Watson the Wizard," and at twenty-nine Paul Watson was riding the crest: his Coulton Cowboys, undefeated all season, were contenders for the Texas State high-school championship. Then a series of disasters struck, and as the crucial game with Bryan approached Paul found that not only his career but his marriage was at stake.

The Long Ride Home is a fast-moving, authentic novel which shows vividly what can happen to people in a small town when football becomes far more than "just a game."



CHAPTER 1

WHEN THE 6:20 train, bound for El Paso and the Coast, awakened him that Monday morning, Paul Watson felt an instinctive urge to burrow under the covers. For several seconds he lay wondering why the day — a nice day for December — filled him with misgivings. Then he remembered the game, and it was like a small electric shock. He sat up and swung his legs off the bed.

The game. In his profession there were games and games and eventually, if you had the material and luck, there was *the* game. Years of working and waiting led up to one climactic afternoon, and even then your fate depended not so much upon any preparations you had made as upon a trick of wind, a coin toss or a misjudged punt. It wasn't a happy thought on Monday morning, but championships were lost and reputations ruined by a bounce of the ball.

On the wall opposite his bed was a small bulletin board. His wife, Grace, had put it there in mid-October when events first pointed toward a district championship for Coulton. Now it was covered with souvenirs of the long season — programs, streamers, news clippings, letters and telegrams. Each Monday morning, with the latest victory trifles pinned in place, it was a ready reminder of the week ahead, a growing challenge.

He stood before the board now, brushing his thick blond hair out of his eyes, flexing his shoulders to shake off the residue of sleep.

In his playing days at Texas Christian the programs had listed him as Paul Watson, halfback, 6', 180, Morgan's Gap, Texas. But that was seven years ago, and he was thinner now. His face was lean and tanned, with a square-jutting chin, wide mouth and piercing blue eyes.

He turned away from the board. Well, he had had a tremendous season here at Coulton. Eleven straight victories, a district championship, and last Saturday a surprising 47-6 triumph over San Marino in the state quarter-finals. The Coulton Cowboys were a fine little team. True, they had no size, no defense, no reserve strength, and they should have been beaten long ago. But when the chips were down, they had won with the fiery determination that makes champions. They were too young and eager to understand that football was a hard business of weight, strength and leverage, that they were riding for an inevitable fall.

Saturday, the semifinals, would be the end of the road. They didn't belong on the same field with William J. Bryan High School.

The trouble with the state play-offs was that a team like Bryan, rich in talent and reserves, had all the advantages. It could coast to a district title and then be fresh and polished for the tough games ahead. A team like Coulton, having to get high week after week, was already tired when the play-offs started. He wondered if the players felt as tired as he this Monday morning. One more week of sweating, shouting, working, hoping. Then Saturday, and the task of beating the best high-school team in Texas.

What did it prove? Did it matter whether you won or not? Paul Watson knew that it did matter greatly for him. A year ago he had been an obscure coach at Bradbury High School in east Texas. Now, at Coulton, he was beginning to be heard about. College scouts would certainly be at Saturday's game. Winning, he'd be remembered when the first college coaching job became available. Losing, he could slip back into obscurity, to work and wait for a chance that might never come again.

He went back to the bed and stood for a moment looking down with protective tenderness at his sleeping wife, a pretty woman even now, in the latter stages of pregnancy. He placed a hand on her shoulder and shook her gently.

Grace's eyes came open and she smiled drowsily. "I was having the most wonderful dream," she said. "It was already Saturday, only it was all mixed up and we were back at T.C.U. You were on the team, and Bryan High was somehow S.M.U."

He touched a finger to her lips. "Not before breakfast, honey," he said. "We'll have enough of that before the week's over."

COULTON High School straddled a low hill north of town. The new gymnasium looked past the outlying houses at rolling ranch-lands, now dry and grassless in the pale December sun.

Crossing the street from his car, Paul saw that the Quarterback Club had already raised a huge banner above the gym entrance, proclaiming: ELEVEN DOWN — TWO TO GO — BEAT BRYAN! No doubt about it. The town was football mad.

When he had come here four months ago, Coulton was still waiting to win its first district title. Nobody seriously believed that the school would ever win a championship. Nobody really cared except the hard core of fanatics known as the Coulton Quarterback Club.

On his first visit to Coulton back in May, R. V. Reagan had told him: "Watson, they know it takes time to build a winner. They'll be more than pleased if you break even this year, but you might as well know that they won't be satisfied with breaking even next year and the year after that. This is a clean, healthy, growing town. It needs the prestige that a winning team can give it. It needs something it can cheer and be proud of. You may not know it, but you've just been given the most important job in town."

How well he had done that job was evident now. Six hundred students, ten thousand people — he had made fanatics of them all. Now, this Monday, his *was* the most important job in town.

Jim Hedrick was waiting in Paul's office. Few strangers recognized Jim for what he was, a high-school coach. He looked like a toymaker out of a child's book.

"Well, Paul," he said, "that letter from Douglas is here."

"Open it," Paul said. "Let's hope it's helpful."

While Mr. Jim was reading it, Paul ran through the rest of the mail. Nothing there except folders from sporting-goods firms and a letter from San Antonio which bore no return address.

Mr. Jim finished the letter and laid it aside. "Doug isn't a very observant coach," he said. "You shouldn't have expected any help from him."

Paul scanned the letter quickly. Dave Douglas was head coach of Mainsfield, a team Bryan had beaten back in October. Paul had wired him after Saturday's game and asked for a run-down on the Bryan team. The letter was sobering. Douglas wished he could be helpful but, frankly, his team had found out nothing by playing Bryan — no weaknesses, no special tricks. "Bryan is a straight power team. They run right down your throat," the letter concluded.

Paul looked at his colleague, whose elflike face was mildly disturbed. "You know, Mr. Jim," he said, "I woke up with a sinful thought this morning. I thought: we're going to get beat Saturday."

Mr. Jim studied Paul's somber face a moment, measuring the remark. "If you feel you're licked, Paul, you *are* licked," he said. "This isn't like you. What's the matter with you this morning?"

Paul shrugged. "I'm in one of those inventory moods, maybe. I not only woke up thinking we were going to get beat, I woke up wondering what difference it makes if we do." He was revealing himself, he knew. Coaches were never supposed to doubt themselves or the importance of the game. "We've been riding a bubble, all of us — the town, the team, you and me. Luck? We've had our share. Hard work? All coaches work their teams hard. But the bubble is what carried us this far, the business of having nothing to lose by losing, so we win. We've got something to lose now —"

Mr. Jim put both hands on Paul's shoulders and shook him gently. "Hey, is this my boy talking? Is this the fellow I've been reading about in the papers — Watson the Wizard, high-school coach-of-the-year? You're too big to cry now. Sure we're riding a bubble. The whole town is. But it's your bubble. No other coach could have blown it half so big. When you push ahead of the pack, when you go for the championship, it's a fearful journey, Paul. And if you miss, it's a long ride home. That's part of the game."

Paul grinned sheepishly. "I know all that. You don't need to lecture me."

The class bell rang, and Mr. Jim started for the door. "I've got a Phys Ed class," he said. "Is there anything before afternoon?"

"Yes," Paul said. "Creighton scouted Bryan on Saturday. I want to hear his report. Tell him for me, will you?"

Paul watched him disappear around the corridor, remembering that once back in the early '30's Mr. Jim, too, had gone for the championship, riding his own bubble of youth and luck and hard work. He hadn't made it, and he had, professionally, come a long way downward since that day.

Paul sat down at his desk. The letter from San Antonio confronted him again, and he opened it. Seeing the letterhead, he gasped. He read it quickly. *We were pleased to have you spend a night here. You must visit us again real soon.* That was all. No date, no signature — just a scrawled hasty message on the stationery of the Palomino Motel, San Antonio. He stared at it until the sheet began trembling in his hand. A footfall sounded in the corridor, and he shoved the letter into a drawer just as R. V. Reagan barged into the office.

As always, Reagan carried a slight aura of the open range, though ranching was one of his lesser interests. His major interests included banking, real estate, civic enterprises and the Coulton football team. "Paul," he said, extending his hand, "congratulations. That game last Saturday was the best any Coulton team ever played. We figured to beat San Marino but not by six touchdowns. You should have heard the talk downtown yesterday."

"That was yesterday," Paul said.

"Oh, sure," Reagan replied, shoving a fist against Paul's shoulder. "I know you coaches. You've got to find fault, hold the kids down. But you know something? We hit our stride last Saturday. Nobody's going to beat this team of ours — not even Bryan."

"Want to bet?" Paul asked. This was Reagan's Monday, we-can-lick-anybody mood, he knew. For the rest of the week he would be watching, worrying, counseling. By Friday he would be almost sick with anxiety over the coming game. "Let's have some coffee," Reagan said now. "I got up late and missed my second cup."

Paul went along with him to the cafeteria, caring little for the coffee and even less for Reagan's company. But it was Reagan's privilege, as town booster, as prime mover of boards and committees, as father of the team quarterback, to have private audience with the coach whenever he chose.

While they were getting their coffee, Paul's mind drifted back to the letter. *You must visit us again real soon.* He had visited them two months ago; he had pulled his hat down and registered as James Williams. The letter had been addressed to Paul Watson.

Reagan was already well into the story before Paul picked up the trail of it. "And there was Bobby, see, getting on this bronc with all the crowd watching —"

"Bobby? Bronc? Where?" Paul exclaimed.

"In this dream I had last night. Like I was telling you — everyone watching and waiting. Because Bobby was the champion rider, see, and this bronc had never been ridden. Only he didn't come out — some clumsy idiot had slammed the gate on his foot."

Lines had formed on Reagan's florid face and his eyes were narrow. "It left me with an awful bad feeling. I can't seem to shake it."

"It must be the weather," Paul said pleasantly. "Everybody's having dreams. My wife dreamed —"

"What if Bobby gets injured?" Reagan asked in a husky voice. It was not a question but a challenge, demanding satisfaction.

Paul shrugged. "What if he doesn't?"

Reagan brought his cup down with a thump. "That's the trouble with your wing-and-spread formations," he said accusingly. "You place the whole load on one boy. He's my boy and I'm proud of him, but nobody should go on every week expecting one boy to do it all."

Paul fought back his anger. Getting along with a man like Reagan was part of the job, he told himself. In football everybody knows more than the coach, especially the following Monday.

"Bobby's not the whole show, Mr. Reagan," he said. "It may look that way from the stands, but Bobby's the playmaker, that's all. He'd carry the same load on a T-formation team."

"You should have worked that Long kid more at quarterback," Reagan said. "That's the only criticism I've ever heard downtown. You leave Bobby in there long after the game's won. I'm surprised you haven't got him injured that way."

Paul was boiling now. Not a month ago Reagan had told him: "Don't jerk Bobby out just because we're a couple of touchdowns ahead. Let the score run up a little."

"James Long will never be a football player. He's too timid. If I ever lose Bobby, Donnie Quillen will be my quarterback."

"Quillen?" Reagan said. "That Negro kid? You're wrong there. They'd never stand for it."

Paul looked at him firmly. "They, Mr. Reagan? Who are they?"

"The town. The people."

"They wouldn't stand for Negroes enrolling at Coulton High, but they did." Paul's anger had passed now. "They wouldn't stand for a Negro on the team, because it would cause ill feeling with the other schools, but Donnie was voted all-district halfback. I'd forgotten he was a Negro until you reminded me."

Reagan's face reddened. "I didn't mean it that way," he protested. "Gosh, you're raw this morning. What makes you that way, Paul? You're the finest coach in the business, but a lot of people in this town think you're plain hard and stubborn and standoffish. I know they're wrong — but, gosh, Paul, you ought to mix a little — shake hands, tell jokes, join a club of some sort."

"I was hired to win football games," Paul said.

"That's right. And I'm not criticizing you myself — understand that. You're young yet, but you'll learn one of these days it pays to keep up the contacts." Reagan pushed his cup aside and lit a cigar. His face, now, was a wreath of friendship. "About that Negro kid — what I meant was he's not qualified to play quarterback. Not because he's a Negro — I don't mean that. Why, he's been out at the ranch with Bobby several times." Reagan spread out his hands in a broad gesture of tolerance. "But Negroes aren't used to leading. They've taken orders for hundreds of years. You can't take one of them and put him out before twenty thousand people and say, 'Here, you take charge.' Don't you see what I mean, Paul?"

Paul stood up, smiling. "Frankly, no," he said. "I see we're talking about something that isn't going to happen. Bobby's made it through eleven games now. He won't fail us Saturday."

Reagan heaved bulkily to his feet. "Course he won't. I tell you — that boy — sometimes —" he threw an arm around Paul's shoulder as they walked toward the door "— sometimes I could bust, seeing him out there, hearing the crowd cheer. You'll see. You'll have a son of your own in a few weeks now."

"Daughter," Paul said, laughing. "I know my luck."

Reagan stopped short, and his arm dropped from Paul's shoulder. He stared angrily at the entrance to Paul's office, where Mitch Mitchell was propped casually against the wall reading the morning paper. "What's he doing here?" Reagan asked in a surly voice.

"I haven't the slightest idea," Paul answered.

"Does he come around often?" Reagan inquired.

Mitch Mitchell was in the gym two or three times a week, hanging around, trying to be friendly. Paul had no more use for him than Reagan did, but he'd had enough of R. V. Reagan for one morning. "No," he said. "He just brings his son to school. A man like Mitchell isn't going anywhere he's not wanted."

"He's not wanted in Coulton," Reagan said. "There's no place here for gamblers." He touched Paul's arm lightly. "Don't let him hang around here. I'm telling you that for your own good, Paul." He strode toward the exit, ignoring Mitch on the way.

Mitch, who had watched Reagan's departure with a broadening smile, turned his attention back to Paul. "Morning," he said. "I see here that you're supposed to turn into a pumpkin." He glanced down at his paper and read aloud. *"So Saturday is midnight for Cinderella, and the wise men say that after the brawl is over it will be Bryan by two touchdowns. Too bad for Paul Watson and his Coulton Cowboys. Seen the morning paper, Coach?"*

"I never read the newspapers," Paul said. He paused at the door of his office. He didn't want to be curt with Mitch. He felt that any man with a son on the team deserved a certain courtesy. Yet he didn't want to be friendly. Mitch was a professional gambler, and he had no business inside a high-school gym.

"You should read them once in a while," Mitch told him. "You're getting to be famous." His eyes looked past Paul into the office. "Say, I bet you're even getting fan mail." The smile on his face lingered, so open and disarming that it might mean anything.

But to Paul, at that particular moment, it carried a singular implication. Veiled behind the smile was the smug knowledge that something ought to be there on the desk — a letter, perhaps, from the Palomino Motel in San Antonio. Suddenly the motive behind the letter was shockingly clear.

But then it wasn't clear at all. You couldn't judge a man like Mitchell. He had no face, only a smile. "Coach," he said, "when's my boy going to score a touchdown?" You couldn't suspect a father of plotting against his own son.

"That's up to him," Paul said. "I'm ready any time he is." He couldn't get his mind off the letter now, or dismiss the impression that Mitch was connected with it. "Well—" he said hopefully, and Mitch took the hint. He folded the newspaper and crammed it into his coat pocket. "See you around, Coach," he said, and started toward the exit.

Inside his office, Paul unlocked the drawer and read the letter again. He tried to think about it, but it still had no real significance. Its meaning was there — ominous, like thunder on the horizon — but it was no more than a rumble, a vague threat. He tore it up and felt a little better.

He turned his mind to the job at hand with the realization that time had suddenly grown short. You needed a whole season to get ready for a team like Bryan. They had five days. Week after week he had told himself that Bryan was too far down the road to worry about. Well, they were there now. He had to think about it.

Paul's other assistant, Creighton Jones, came in carrying a clip board with several sheets of scrawled scouting notes. He tossed it noisily on Paul's desk. "Let's not kid ourselves. Bryan's a good ball club."

"How good?"

"Plenty good." Creighton picked up his clip board and flipped the sheets. "They go for the down instead of the touchdown, so they don't look very dangerous until they've rolled up a twenty-point lead and you leaf through your notes and find they've controlled the ball about seventy percent of the time. Their line is the best I've seen all season."

Paul bent over the notes, determined to draw all possible information from the report. Creighton was a hard-working aide and an excellent scout. His driving energy had been a big factor in Coulton's success. Like any good assistant, he had his own ideas and preferences. He could still be loyal, even though willing, should the opportunity arise, to step over the fallen body of his chief. It was just that he was so obvious about it.

An hour later, Creighton was gone and Paul was busy changing blocking assignments on a series of plays. Milton Forrest, the school superintendent, came in and sat down. He was a short, fattenning man in his late forties, with a patient manner. "What do you think?" he asked. "Were we smart to accept that Alamo Stadium offer?"

"Certainly." It was a choice which had seemed unquestionable to Paul. "We'll draw fifteen, maybe twenty thousand people in San Antonio. If we'd demanded a coin toss and won, we couldn't have put five thousand in our own field with a shoe spoon. If we'd lost the toss, Bryan would have elected to play in Alamo Stadium anyway, and we'd have had the visitor's share of the gate instead of a fifty-fifty split. Don't tell me somebody's complaining."

"No," Forrest said, "not really. Just a little grumbling downtown. Some of the merchants are thinking about Saturday business. Some of the local sports are thinking about the home-field advantage."

"I don't believe in home-field advantage," Paul said rather brusquely. "If a team's going to win, it'll win no matter where the game is played. As for the rest, football has nothing to do with business."

"Still," Forrest said, "the merchants will tell you that their taxes help support the schools."

"They don't support the athletic program," Paul answered. "We pay our own way."

"In that case," Forrest said, smiling, "football *is* a business. I'm not being difficult, Paul. I'm merely showing you one of the many ways that public opinion and politics enter into a school program. There won't be much criticism — not this time. Coulton's so proud of this team that we can do anything we want within reason." He paused a moment and lit a cigarette. "But that wasn't what I wanted to see you about anyway. Have you heard about John Golden?"

Paul shook his head. John Golden was coach at nearby Big Canyon, Coulton's archrival. His team had been the district favorite, as always, until Coulton defeated it three weeks ago.

"He's on the griddle," Forrest said. "They're going to ask him to resign."

"Resign?" Paul couldn't believe it. John Golden was one of the best young coaches in the state. In his three years at Big Canyon, his teams had lost only two games. "They must have some special reason for that."

"Naturally," Forrest said. "They always have a special reason, even if they have to invent it. Golden is supposed to be having an affair with one of the teachers. He's also supposed to have been drunk the night of the Coulton game and to have used abusive language in the dressing room."

Paul was shocked and disgusted. "I know John Golden better than that," he said. "So do you."

Forrest nodded. "Of course. But it wouldn't do to state their real case against him. When John came to Big Canyon three years ago, he won a state title, so the citizens gave him a three-thousand-dollar bonus for a Christmas present. Last year he lost to Bryan in the semifinals, which is considered passable by Big Canyon standards, so they gave him a new automobile for Christmas. This year he lost to Coulton, and in Big Canyon that's considered a disgrace. John's doing worse each season, they decide, so it's time to give him the boot."

"But one game!" Paul said incredulously. "He lost one game all season!"

"That's enough in Big Canyon," Forrest replied. "When you lose to Coulton, it's more than enough."

Paul slumped back in his chair. "Well, that's a fine comedown! Our team catches John on a bad night. We beat him, and John loses his job. That's really one for the trophy shelf. What kind of people live in Big Canyon anyway — cannibals?"

"Football fans," Forrest said mildly. "You've never seen a football town, Paul, not like Big Canyon. You may see one here in a few years, if we keep winning. In most towns the people go out to cheer their kids and if they lose they say, 'Well, it's only a game.' In Big Canyon they go out for pride, for glory, for victory at whatever cost. I'm not a psychologist, and I can't tell you how certain towns get that way. But it starts with a winning streak. The town is nothing. No one ever heard of it until a football team brings it a taste of fame. Then football becomes a mania. They buy their kids balls and

helmets when they're three years old. They float a bond issue, not for new classrooms but to enlarge the stadium. They collect a private fund to hire the best coach they can find — and God help him if he ever loses a game."

"If I were John Golden," Paul said, "they could have my resignation. I'd cram it down their throats."

"Would you?" Forrest asked. "Think a moment, Paul. Golden had a fine career ahead of him. A year ago he was due to get the coaching job at Barrington College until the trustees up there decided to let Ben Davis finish out his contract. Now what chance will he have at Barrington, or even at Podunk High, if he leaves Big Canyon accused of drunkenness and adultery? You'd do the same thing he's going to do — fight for your life. And that's what I wanted to see you about. The Big Canyon school board is planning a special session Wednesday night. Ostensibly it's to fill a teaching vacancy, but Curtis Stollins, the Big Canyon superintendent, knows the real reason. Curtis has his back to the wall at Big Canyon. He says that if he doesn't stand up for his school and beat the fanatics on this issue he never will. The Big Canyon school system will just be an excuse for having a football team. He thinks that if the other superintendents and coaches of the district will rally behind Golden, if we'll all show up at that board meeting Wednesday night, we might scare the trustees out of taking action."

"You can count on me," Paul assured him.

"Good. I told Curtis we could. As he says, you have to draw a line somewhere. Football can grow only so big. It's a fine sport, but it's a poor substitute for a high-school education."

CHAPTER 2

PLAYERS were jogging out onto the field in scattered groups when Paul arrived that afternoon. The dressing room, reeking of sweat and liniment, was empty except for Mr. Jim and Creighton.

"What do we work on?" Creighton asked. "Defense? Running plays? Passes? How do we beat a team like Bryan?"

Paul put his cleated shoe on the bench to lace it. "Hard work. Lots of sweat. But suppose we don't?"

"Oh, come on, Paul," Mr. Jim said. "You're Watson the Wizard. You're supposed to pull a rabbit out of a helmet."

They laughed at this, and Paul straightened, rolling his shoulders and feeling the comfortable warmth of his sweat togs. He was in his element now. No more Reagans or Mitch Mitchells, no dreams, no riddles — nothing but sweat, muscle, the hard popping of leather.

"Saturday," he said, "we move the ball. Three yards, four yards — we keep moving. We concentrate on holding the ball, on getting just enough yardage to keep possession. We can't stop Bryan, but, with Bobby calling signals, there's a chance we can outthink them. It's Bobby's game, the way I see it. If he calls it right, we've got a chance to win." He looked at his two assistants. "Does that make sense?"

"Does to me," Mr. Jim said.

Creighton wrinkled his brow. "Paul, I don't want to be a wet blanket," he said carefully, "but Bobby is going to be a marked man Saturday. Bryan has scouted us blind, and they know they have to stop Bobby. They also know that our entire attack develops from the tailback post." Creighton drew a quick breath. "I think we ought to drop the double wing — shift our attack and use Bobby as a decoy — even go to single wing or the T —"

Paul arched his brows. "In five days?"

"Well —" Creighton faltered "— no, I guess not. You're the boss, Paul. One thing I know. We're going to be in a fix Saturday if Bobby gets hurt. It wouldn't be that way with a T-formation team because the backfield load is passed around. That's what I don't like about double wing. It puts the whole load on the tailback."

Paul's jaw stiffened. "If you don't like double wing," he snapped, "you'd better hunt yourself another job. It so happens that I do like double wing. As long as I'm head coach here, we're going to run double wing and I'm not going to listen to any gripes about it."

"All right, all right," Mr. Jim interceded. "Single wing, double wing. We're going to need wings like the birds for this one. Let's get to work."

Red-faced and chagrined, Creighton went on ahead to the practice field, shouting to the players to get moving. Following at Paul's side, Mr. Jim said, "Paul, I'm going to butt in. Don't bite me."

"Go ahead and say it."

"You encourage him to speak his mind, and when he does you jump down his throat. We've got a big week coming up. Let's pull together."

Paul's scowl deepened. "I should apologize to him," he said. "It's not his fault. He just happened to say something that R. V. Reagan said this morning."

The question of a substitute quarterback would never be answered, he knew. This was why he grew angry and defensive whenever someone mentioned the possibility of Bobby's being injured. He was the best high-school quarterback Paul had ever seen. Relieving him was always a problem. James Long, a sturdy little junior, usually took over when the score was out of danger but he would never be in Bobby's class.

Paul once had considered making a quarterback of Donnie Quillen, but the Negro boy had long since found a starting berth at left wing. He was big and fast and durable; he never grew tired. Paul sometimes moved him to quarterback on the second team at practice and was always amazed at his potential abilities. His play calling was plagued with doubts, but Donnie had the basic something which James Long lacked — the guts and fire.

For eleven games now the Coulton Cowboys had made the old-fashioned double wing work. In this formation two backs took station as wings close behind the line and a yard outside the ends. Bobby Reagan would pass or fake to either wing or shovel the ball to Ernie Gillis, the fullback, for a delayed line buck. It was a process of leverage, of drawing the defense out of position. When it worked, opponents looked as though they were chasing butterflies. A San Antonio sports writer had tried to explain Coulton's success. "Coaches have forgotten how to defend against double wing," he wrote. "Stanford had the same advantage back in 1940 when it broke the game wide open by reviving the T formation. Coulton is alone in its class, with an old, forgotten formation and a brave new adventure in human relations."

He was referring to Donnie Quillen, whom he labeled "a high-school Jackie Robinson."

Throughout its history Coulton had been a town without a Negro

citizen. Then in September a man from California named Holman Quillen had bought a service station in Coulton, and when the Chamber of Commerce welcoming committee went down to meet him it had to swallow hard before shaking hands.

Donnie and his sister presented a problem. The state laws forbade the mixing of whites and Negroes in public schools. However, these laws had been countermanded by the U. S. Supreme Court decision against segregation. At present no one knew for certain which rule applied. It was left up to the local school district, and the Coulton school board, some of them very reluctantly, had voted to enroll Donnie and his sister.

The following Monday, Donnie had appeared at the athletic field. He had played football in California, he explained to Paul. Paul used him at odd positions, hoping he would soon quit. The players gawked at him at first, then ignored him. At Wednesday's scrimmage Ernie Gillis took off around the right side under full throttle. Donnie charged in from halfback and almost tore him apart. Ernie came back to the huddle boiling mad. "Call that play again, Coach," he said. "I dare you." Donnie nailed him a second time, so hard that Ernie fumbled the ball and had to be helped to his feet. "Again?" Paul asked. Ernie shook his head. "Hey, that boy's a football player!" he said.

Two weeks later Donnie was on the starting team.

For the first half hour this Monday afternoon Paul had them running signals in separate units, Bobby on the main team, Donnie quarterbacking the reserves. Then he brought them together for light contact and began working on details. After an hour they were scrimmaging, with Creighton and Mr. Jim handling the units in close and Paul standing aside and calling out his orders and corrections.

It was then that a young boy in blue jeans and a faded Coulton jacket, who had been loitering on the sideline, started edging out on the field toward Paul. He was a sallow, shy-appearing lad of seventeen, with an intent face and a thick mat of sandy hair. Finally he was standing close beside Paul. "Hi, Coach," he said.

Paul gave him the barest nod, then turned his eyes back to the scrimmage.

"That was really some game Saturday, huh, Coach?" the boy beside Paul said.

Paul ignored him for a moment, then uttered a vague "umm." The kid was a pest; he never missed a practice session or a chance to stand next to Paul and start a conversation. He was forever distracting the players by clapping his hands in imitation of Paul, shouting praise and criticism. If he were anyone else, Paul would have ordered him off the field long ago. But Woffie was something of a tragic case. Technically he was still a part of the team.

"Woffie," Paul said carefully, "do me a favor, will you? Go into my locker and bring me my watch."

Woffie brightened. "Yes, sir," he said. "I'll run get it for you right away."

He didn't run, of course. He pressed along with a bobbing, off-center gait. Paul walked over to the main team and began calling specific plays, standing beside Bobby and watching, counting aloud as they developed. "Five seven option," he called. "Let's see you fool Donnie. He's gone to sleep out there."

He trotted after the play as Bobby swept to the left. Glancing down field, he saw Mitch's son, Robin Mitchell, who was playing wingback, and the left end, Petey Gonzales, making their cuts. Donnie had left his defensive halfback post and was charging toward the scrimmage line. Bobby's arm cocked, whipped the ball away just as Donnie plowed into him. Paul followed the ball's deadly flight, saw Robin catch it over his shoulder. Then he turned to Donnie.

"That was real pretty," he said in lofty scorn. "Who's supposed to be playing halfback out there where they just caught that pass?"

Donnie looked ready to cry. He hated to make a mistake.

Someone was calling, "Coach!" Looking around, Paul saw that the players hadn't gone back to their positions. They were standing where the play had stopped, staring with stricken faces at someone on the ground. Paul couldn't see who it was because Mr. Jim was kneeling beside the fallen boy, but he knew that it was Bobby.

He felt a sudden panic. "Break it up! Get back to work!" he bawled. "Didn't you ever see a man knocked down before?"

Bobby was rolling and writhing on the ground, his face con-

torted, and Mr. Jim was saying, "Easy, boy, easy. Keep the leg still."

Paul dropped to one knee. "What is it, Bobby? Knee? Ankle?"

"His knee," Mr. Jim answered. "He twisted it when Donnie hit him. He wasn't expecting that tackle."

"Let's get him up," Paul said. Together they hoisted Bobby and began walking him toward the sideline. Paul saw Mr. Jim's face. It was ashen. Each time

Bobby tried to put pressure on the knee, Mr. Jim bit his lip.

At the sideline they lowered him to the ground and Paul worked over him, testing the cap, rolling the leg from side to side.

"Gee, that's exactly how it happened to me."

Paul looked up. It was Woffie, standing close behind him. Bitterness swept over Paul. Here it was, his quarterback injured, as all the smart boys had predicted. Here was Woffie, the tone of his voice saying, *See, it was bound to happen.*

"Woffie," Paul said, "you get out of here. Get off this field. You've been hanging around all season, getting in the way, causing trouble for everybody. We don't need you. We don't want you. Don't come back, you hear." He bent over Bobby again. He was sure the knee wasn't broken. But swelling had already begun. "You'd better get him down to Doc Morgan's," he said to Mr. Jim.

Woffie was still there. Paul stood up, hands on hips, and glared at him. "Well?" he said.

Woffie sidled away a step before holding out his hand. "H-here's your watch, Coach." Paul took it, and Woffie hobbled off slowly. Paul watched him for a moment, feeling a vague guilt, wanting to call him back. But it was better this way.



Out on the field the players were milling in dumb uncertainty, watching Bobby's painful journey toward the gate. Paul strode toward them, shouting as he went. It took all his strength to feign anger, to demand action, instead of watching helplessly with the rest while Bobby Reagan left the field, perhaps for the last time.

By the time Paul had showered and dressed night had come. Grace, his wife, always came for him at five thirty, and he was almost an hour late. He would probably be late all week.

He looked for his car and saw it parked across the street. He was almost there before he saw that the driver was not his wife but Helen Jenkins. The tall, attractive, dark-haired woman smiled as he opened the door, and slid across the seat. "Where's Grace?" he asked.

"She was tired. I went by to see her and made her lie down. She shouldn't be driving in her condition."

Among the many things which troubled him of late was Helen's sudden friendship with his wife. She had begun visiting her several times a week, driving her downtown, helping with dinner but never staying to eat it. She always left as soon as Paul arrived home.

"You don't mind, do you, Paul?" she asked.

"Mind?" He pressed the starter. "Why should I mind?" He drove to the corner before asking, "Can I drop you somewhere?"

"Home," she said. "You know where it is."

For several minutes they were silent.

"Paul," she said. He looked at her in the passing light and saw that her face was grave and anxious. "Paul, let's be friends. We're acting like a couple of guilty children, and after all we are grown people. Let's forgive each other and be friends."

"Okay," he said. He laughed wearily. "I need every friend I can get. Do you have a cigarette?"

She opened her purse. "It would help," she said, "if you'd regard me for what I am, not for what you thought I was. I'm just a schoolteacher who should have married ten years ago. I would have, but that's another story — about ships that pass and a lieutenant who didn't care enough to come back. After ten years spent teaching little girls to cook and sew, I sometimes grow weak and desperate."

She struck a match. "That may not be very flattering to either of us, but what I'm saying is that you don't need to avoid me. I'm not really dangerous."

He took the cigarette she handed him. "Did you hear the good news? Bobby's out. He hurt his knee this afternoon."

"Bobby Reagan? Oh, that's bad, isn't it, Paul?"

"It could be." Then he added by way of apology, "That's why I'm not feeling very friendly right now."

GRACE was asleep when he reached home, and he was careful not to disturb her. He went to the phone to call Mr. Jim and found the memo pad covered with notations. "Call Mr. Jim at home." "Reagan called, said to call him." "Paul, call at the bus station for a package."

He began dialing Mr. Jim's number. "Bus station?" he said aloud. He picked up the pad again to be sure.

"Paul, is that you?"

"What about Bobby, Mr. Jim?"

"It's not so bad. They took X rays and there's nothing broken. It's a sprain, Doc said. I didn't know you could sprain a knee."

"What about Saturday? Can he play?"

"No, Paul. Doc says there isn't a chance."

Paul closed his eyes. "Well, that's that," he said. It was all he could offer. You spend a season, a lifetime building for one big moment. You enlist a team of splendid boys, a school, a city. You blow it bigger and bigger, and your bubble bursts.

"Paul," Mr. Jim said. "I was thinking. If—I'm saying if—we moved Donnie to tailback and Robin to wing, we'd add something to our running game we haven't had all season. Bryan might not be ready for it. If we said nuts to the fancy stuff, if we just bowed our necks. Paul, listen. Don't worry about it. A thing like this can fire up a team."

"I'm not worried."

"Tomorrow we'll move Donnie to tailback."

"Sure, Mr. Jim. I'll see you in the morning."

He found Reagan's home number in the directory and dialed. The man's deep voice spoke almost immediately, as though he had

been awaiting the call. "Come on out to the ranch, Paul. We can cry on each other's shoulders."

"I'm too beat for that. Is Bobby home?"

"Yeah, he's here. Doc Morgan just left. They've got him propped up in bed with a heat lamp. That knee's a mess, Paul." There was a weighty pause. "How did it happen?"

Paul gave him the details.

"I hate it, Paul. I hate it bad," Reagan said. "Not only for Bobby's sake and the team's, but for the whole town. It's caused a lot of talk already. Who knows what it'll lead to. You know what they're saying downtown, don't you?"

Paul was suddenly weak. He reached for a chair and sat down. *They again.* He never talked to Reagan without hearing that *they* were predicting, threatening, viewing with alarm.

"They're saying it wasn't an accident. They say that Negro kid did it deliberately, that Bobby had already thrown the pass and that Negro hit him while his back was turned."

Paul struggled to hold his voice steady. "Did they say why he did it?"

"To get the quarterback job. Why else? It wasn't enough that we let him play on the team. Why, it's been talk around town all season that he was laying for Bobby."

"Oh, shut up, Reagan! You know better than that! I was right on top of that play this afternoon. It was pure accident. It could have happened to anyone. I'd like to know who *they* are — those smart guys who always know more about the team than I do."

"Well, Paul," Reagan said, "I don't want to upset you, but they told me downtown that one of your own players started the talk."

"I don't believe that. Which player?"

"They didn't say."

"They never will, Mr. Reagan, nor will I ever know who *they* are. I've never met any of them. But if you'll tell me their names, I'll call on each one personally and do my best to explain how wrong they are."

"Now, Paul, Paul," Reagan said soothingly, "don't get me wrong. I don't believe a word they're saying. That kid, Donnie, couldn't possibly have done such a thing deliberately. I know it as

well as you do. But I thought you ought to know how the wind's shifting. I'm telling you for your own good. A thing like this can be bad. I don't mean that you've got to kick him off the team — it probably won't come to that. But there's some talk he might be the quarterback now that Bobby's out. You said this morning —" Reagan cut his sentence short, adding with a judicious tone of finality, "You simply can't do that now, Paul."

AFTER dinner Paul drove down to the bus station. A handful of weary, crumpled customers sat morosely in the waiting room. Behind a counter piled high with magazines was a woman, the agent, reading an evening paper. He had to clear his throat before she noticed him. "I have a package here. Paul Watson."

The woman went into the baggage room. Nothing about the matter pleased him: the ride downtown when he was tired and worried, the drab, oppressive atmosphere of the station. He was stricken with a sense of impending doom, as if Monday were a trap into which he had blundered.

There was no charge, the woman told him. She handed him a flat parcel loosely wrapped in brown paper, and he signed for it quickly. Back in his car, he turned on the dashboard light and examined it. No return address. The lettering was crude: *Paul Watson, Football Coach, Coulton, Texas.* In a corner was a single word, heavily underlined: *Personal*.

He ripped off the paper, and there it was. The same letterhead: *Palomino Motel, San Antonio, Texas.* The same scrawled handwriting. He had to tilt it toward the light to read it: *We'll be expecting you.* Something was clipped to the sheet. A picture. He stared at it for several seconds, hardly believing that it was true. In the picture he was turning away from the door of a motel. A part of his car, with its license plate legible, was visible in the foreground. His face was unmistakable. So was the face of the woman with him, Helen Jenkins.

We'll be expecting you.

His first impulse was to rip the picture to shreds and toss it out the window, but he crammed it inside the glove compartment. He drove to a service station on the eastern outskirts, and while his car

was being filled he phoned Grace and told her that he had to go to San Antonio on business.

"Do you have to — tonight?" She paused a moment. "Is everything all right?"

"Yes. It's just a little something that came up unexpectedly. Something about the game."

"I'm so sorry you have to go tonight."

"So am I, Grace," he told her. "Terribly sorry."

He took a box of folder matches from the tobacco counter. After he had driven past the city-limits sign, he stopped and burned the letterhead and picture.

CHAPTER 3

THE HILLS were black and lonely, and for many miles the highway was deserted except for a few ponderous trucks laboring on the grades. For a while he did not think about the meeting he was keeping at the Palomino Motel, San Antonio. Numbed and bewildered, his mind came back by slow degrees to the letters and the picture.

What a cunning trick it was! Whoever had taken that photograph must have made a practice of this sort of blackmail.

Paul's face burned as he remembered that night. For two months he had tried to forget it, though he knew it was something which would plague and embarrass him for years. It had been a terrible mistake, his own as well as Helen's, and it didn't help that they had realized as much before it was too late.

It was wrong, of course, and he deserved to be caught. But this seemed a stiff penalty for something that hadn't even happened. He hadn't chased Helen. She had been no more than a casual friend until that night.

They had been new members of the Coulton faculty when they met in September, and they had found a certain friendship in sympathizing with each other. Passing his office on the way to the home-economics department, she would pause for a minute, always with some foolish, irrelevant question about football.

Neither of them had liked Coulton those first weeks. "I feel as if

"I'm on trial," she had said. "You know — people looking me over and wondering if I smoke, what sort of men I go out with and why a woman my age isn't married."

He had told her that his own position was no less severe. "I'm on trial and I know it. Football coaches always are. Each week the people sit in the grandstand — call it the jury box if you like — and pass judgment."

"Why does anyone ever want to be a teacher?" she had asked once. "It's horrible to be in a glass cage for the rest of your life."

As Coulton began winning football games and the name Paul Watson became more and more prominent in public talk, Helen's interest in him had increased. She was outspokenly elated, not only because Paul was passing trial but also because he was stirring up excitement in what she considered a dull, reclusive town.

Late in October the team had gone by bus to Mainsfield, an hour's ride east of San Antonio, for a nondistrict game. Paul had driven over in his own car.

Mainsfield was extremely tough. In the second quarter Jack Cadensford, the right wingback, was pounded senseless and carried from the field on a stretcher. The team was still young and fractious at that stage of the season, and the fallen teammate, the sudden silence, the wail of the ambulance as it left the field tore the boys to pieces. Nevertheless Coulton had won, 20 to 14.

After the game Paul lingered on the field talking to the Mainsfield coach, and on his way to the dressing room he encountered Helen among the fans leaving the stands. She had come on one of the school buses and dreaded the long ride home. It seemed natural under the circumstances to offer her a lift and for her to accept. He gave her the keys and told her where his car was parked before going to check out the team.

He noticed the difference almost as soon as they were together in the car. Heretofore they had talked eagerly. Now they said almost nothing. She sat far away from him, smoking too many cigarettes, seeming tired and withdrawn and at the same time watchful. It was disconcerting now, after five years of loyal married life, to be driving at night with another woman, with a radio playing, with an almost forgotten feeling of intimacy and adventure.

In the gathering lights of San Antonio, he had glanced at her and found her eyes fixed steadily upon him behind the wreaths of smoke. She smiled and said, "Coffee?" And somehow the single word had shattered their restraints.

They stopped near a restaurant on the outskirts of the city. He took her arm to help her at the curb, held it, felt her fingers draw back into his hand. At the door to the restaurant, he paused and glanced carefully around the tables. "Do you see anyone — from Coulton?" Her voice was a guarded whisper. "No," he said, and her fingers tightened.

Back in the car, she was no longer far away from him. When he reached for the radio switch, her fingers found his hand. Then suddenly he was making love to her, and for a long while there was nothing except the closeness of her. Somewhere music was playing and a light kept blinking off and on.

"It's much too public here," she said. "That light. It keeps flashing in my eyes." She lifted her head and the light came, revealing the tremulous lines of her face. "It says Palomino Motel."

Even as they registered, they both recognized their mistake. What they had contemplated was cheap and unnatural; and as they stood there in the light of the flashing sign, they had struggled to explain to each other.

It was with a sense of relief and escape that they had driven on to Coulton. At the town's edge she read the sign aloud: "Coulton, population nine thousand eight hundred and seventy-one," and he realized that they were the first words either had spoken since leaving the motel. Her voice was defiant, yet weary and resigned, as though she were thrusting the night aside, never to be thought of or repeated.

The picture had been taken in the light of the flashing sign. Paul knew that now. But why? And by whom?

He knew why, of course, though he would not admit it as yet. It might be a simple case of blackmail. He'd be asked to pay a few hundred dollars. Well, he could manage that. All things considered, he'd be getting a bargain at that price.

There were other payments they might ask, but he wouldn't think about them.



THE LIGHT was blinking as it had that night. Paul could see inside the office where a Negro porter was slumped behind the desk. Beyond him someone seated in a low chair was smoking and reading a newspaper. He entered the office, letting the door slam behind him. The porter snapped erect and reached for his registration book. Beyond him the man who had been reading took a cigar from his mouth and gazed at Paul, his face expressionless.

Paul stood staring back at the man in the chair. For several seconds they measured each other like wrestlers waiting to come to grips. "I'm Paul Watson," he said finally.

The man put the cigar back in his mouth. He was a beefy man whose flesh had sagged with middle age. His nose was flat, his ears puffed. Once he had probably been a professional fighter. He shuffled the paper. "I was just looking at your picture here," he said. "Seen the evening paper?"

"I never read the newspaper," Paul said.

"Fellow like you ought to keep up with the news." The man's voice had a flippant, taunting ring. "When you get to be famous, people are always taking your picture. Right?"

Paul did not answer.

"Hammerhead," the man barked at the porter, "take a break."

The porter left promptly, and the man in the chair said, "Good boy there. A couple of years back he was a first-class middleweight. But he found out he could make more money losing a fight than he could winning it. That was smart. Trouble was the commission found out what he found out, and that was dumb. It's only smart when you get away with it, ain't it, Coach?"

Paul clenched his fists, feeling his whole body coil and tighten. "If you've got something to say to me, get it said — quick."

The man looked pained. "I guess you don't know me," he said. "The name's Bolin — Henry Bolin. Friends call me Hunkie. Does that mean anything to you?"

Paul shook his head. "Not unless you're a photographer."

Bolin grinned and got up. Erect, the man was monstrous. He walked to the door, listened a moment and came back. "Watson," he said bluntly, "your team is going to get beat Saturday."

Paul sagged. So that was it. He had known it all along, from the

moment he received the first letter from Bolin. Knowing it but unwilling to admit it, he was completely unprepared now. His response was lame. "I wouldn't bet on that," he said.

"I would," Bolin assured him. "I'm going to. The sports writers say you'll lose by two touchdowns, give or take a little, and today the betting boys were offering twelve points and asking fourteen." He grinned. "You're just full of that old school spirit, Coach. You know you're beat but you won't admit it. This Bryan High — ever seen them play?"

Paul shook his head.

"As a sports-loving man, you've missed yourself a treat. Bryan High is the best football team in Texas. Oh, sure, you've got a fine little team out at Coulton. I saw you play a couple of times. That Reagan kid is in a class by himself. But you ain't going to beat Bryan with one boy. Right?"

"Get to the point, mister," Paul said. "You want me to throw the game — is that it?"

Bolin let his breath out sharply. "Ohhh, that's a nasty word. I wouldn't ask you to do a thing like that. That would be unethical. Besides —" a grin spread slowly over his face "— you're going to get beat anyway, like I keep telling you. Now I'm a Bryan man myself. But I'm also a working man. All I got is this motel, which really don't make me no money, and a couple of other little investments that ain't paying off so good. Point is, I can't afford to go losing no bets. Now if I was to give fourteen, like they're asking, and you and your boys was to get lucky and lose by only a touchdown — you're going to lose anyway, but if you was to lose by less than fourteen points — you see how tough that would be for me, don't you, Coach?"

Bolin spread out his hands, his face flaccid and cordial. "Now I'm a very reasonable man. Throw the game? Why, I wouldn't want my worst enemy to do a thing like that. Fact, I ain't asking you to do a thing that probably won't happen anyway. All you have to do is make sure it happens."

Paul glared at the man. "I don't have to do a damned thing I don't want to."

Without taking his eyes off Paul, Bolin reached under the count-

er and brought up a manila envelope. He took out a picture and laid it on the desk top. "Thing is, you *want* to."

He read the look of defeat on Paul's face and went on in a hard, unhurried voice. "The trouble with you, Watson, is that you don't realize what's happened to you. When you came out of the sticks and got yourself that coaching job at Coulton, nobody'd ever heard of you and nobody'd ever heard of Coulton. You could have walked in here with a woman and I wouldn't have known you. But you took that wing-and-spread formation that everybody'd forgot about, and all of a sudden you was a big man, with your picture in the papers. You're no hick coach now. You're Watson the Wizard. Trouble is, when you hit the big time — and you'll make it, Watson, if you play ball with the right people — you ain't going nowhere without being seen. You ain't going to make no mistakes without it costing you."

"And what does this one figure to cost me?"

Bolin looked at him piercingly. "Your job. If you don't play, I'll mail one of these pictures to every school trustee in Coulton by tomorrow night. I'll raise such a stink in that town they won't even know what time the game starts Saturday. I'll mail them to the trustees up at Barrington College." He caught the flicker of surprise on Paul's face. "You didn't know you was in line for the Barrington job, did you? Well, you are. But cross me and you're through — now, tonight. You'll never coach another team."

Bolin waited, his eyes never leaving Paul's face. For an eternity of silence he watched him, and then he said, "What'll it be, Watson?"

Paul looked at Bolin at last. It was surprisingly easy to say. "The way you want it, I suppose. I don't have much choice."

Bolin beamed. "You're a reasonable man. I knew all along you'd see my side of it."

THE COURTHOUSE clock showed a quarter of twelve and the town was dark in sleep when he arrived back in Coulton. Grace would be waiting for him, he knew, but she would ask no questions. She trusted him completely.

Everyone trusted him. He was riding a great wave of esteem, not

because he was warm, or popular, or even human, but because he was a perfectionist with a winning football team. Since coming to Coulton, he had set himself up deliberately in isolation. He had insisted on making the decisions, taking the blame for any mistakes. He had demanded the utmost of his players, driving them to exhaustion day after day. He had ignored the critics, had been curt, hard, indifferent to everyone. No questions, no arguments. Players, coaches, spectators — they had done it his way.

Years ago he had realized that there was nothing magic about his touch. He was plain Paul Watson, football coach. He would win and lose, have good seasons, bad seasons. If he emerged, it would be simply because he worked harder and assimilated the game more thoroughly than other coaches.

Football was fundamental arithmetic — a series of rules and lines and limits. It didn't prove anything. Like any sport, it was an endless striving, a burning desire to excel. It wasn't educating, and you weren't a teacher. You were hired to give the school glory and prestige. It wasn't even fun. It was sweat, grime, toil, pain. In football you weren't judged by your handshake or your smile or the way you told a joke, but by how many games you won.

In Coulton they could say of him, proudly: "Well, he's kind of standoffish. He doesn't mix. He's a slave driver, but that's what it takes to build a winner. He's Watson the Wizard, high-school coach-of-the-year. He's headed for the big time, that boy."

But if he reminded them that he was, after all, plain Paul Watson, football coach, there was no one to turn to now, no one to forgive him his mistake. In Coulton they could say as easily: "No, sir, I never liked him. He was too hard on the boys. He never tried to be friendly. He was out to win, strictly for Paul Watson. I knew all along he was chasing around with that teacher. See, he'd sell out his team in a minute if it took that to save his skin."

CHAPTER 4

BEFORE entering the gym Tuesday morning, he paused to study the clearing sky. He had dreaded the increasing prospect of rain, knowing that a heavy field on Saturday would ruin whatever

chance the team might have. But now the clouds were broken and the wind had relented. Saturday should be clear and crisp. He went into the gym with the feeling that luck was coming his way again.

Sell out his team for the price of a picture? That was yesterday. He'd been unprepared for Bolin — that's all. What he'd really been doing, unknowingly at the time, was stalling until he could figure a way out of it. Now he'd keep stalling, waiting for a break. He might lead Bolin on, then double-cross him, beat him at his own rotten game. The worst happening, he'd coach his last team Saturday and do his honest best to make it a winning team. By Saturday he would have it figured, and he would never sell out his team — never.

Mitch Mitchell was seated in his office, reading the morning paper. Seeing him, Paul ducked around a corner. Rage shook him.

It was obvious why Mitchell was there and why he had been in the gym so frequently in recent weeks. He was Bolin's field man. A man like Bolin, seen around the high school, would arouse immediate suspicion, but Mitch Mitchell, with a son in school, could maintain the pressure without difficulty. The fix, then, involved Bolin, Mitchell and probably other gamblers. And each of them was acting on the assumption that he owned the Coulton team.

Paul spun on his heel, and plowed toward the office. He slammed the door and locked it, turned and confronted Mitchell. "You're getting out of here," he informed him, "as soon as I set you straight. Tell your friend Bolin I've changed my mind. Tell him I'm not going to do it."

Mitch squinted and said, "My friend who?"

"Bolin. You know who I'm talking about."

"Hunkie Bolin? Changed your mind about what?"

Paul glowered at him. The innocent face, the teasing smile. It was too much like the cheap humiliation of last night. He seized Mitch's coat and hauled him to his feet. Mitch offered no resistance. The smile never left his face. He seemed resigned to such outbursts, as though they were normal hazards of his trade.

Paul unlocked the door. "Okay, Mitchell, get out of here. Tell Bolin what I said." Mitch straightened his coat and strolled out at the very moment that Helen Jenkins entered the corridor. He

tipped his hat to her, smiling, casual, without the slightest show of haste. She glanced at Paul and said, "Good morning, Wizard." He muttered a good morning as she walked up the corridor.

CREIGHTON JONES came rushing in a few moments before the class bell sounded. "Paul, you son of a gun!" he said, pumping Paul's hand vigorously. "I just heard the big news! Congratulations!"

Paul peered at Creighton's excited face. "What big news?"

"About Barrington College. Reagan just told me."

"That's good," Paul said tonelessly. "What did he tell you?"

Creighton looked incredulous. "You mean you haven't heard? Oh, Lord, maybe I'm giving away secrets."

Paul smiled. "No, I've heard the rumor. I'm in line for the Barrington job. Ben Davis is going to have his head removed. It's December, time for all good coaches to move up and all bad coaches to get the axe. If I'm in line for the Barrington job, so is every other coach in Texas who had a winning season."

Creighton was punctured. The joy blew out of him and his face drooped. He cocked a leg over the corner of Paul's desk. "You know," he said slowly, "you are the darnedest guy. Do you ever get excited? I've watched you at games. They score, you frown. We score, you frown. Maybe that's what it takes. If so, I might as well give up. I'll never be a football coach. If I were you I'd be walking on the ceiling right now, like a fly."

"I doubt it. Not if you were me. What did Reagan tell you?"

"Well, it's all unofficial. You know how these things work. The wolves are howling up at Barrington. Ben Davis lost seven games this season. His contract expires in January and it won't be renewed. The talk is that they're planning a complete new program. They want to reach down to the high-school level and get a young coach — one like you — with enough ability and drive to build from the bottom up. Reagan says that the Barrington athletic committee have had their eye on you and John Golden and a couple of other guys, but Golden is involved in that mess at Big Canyon now and you're the front runner. Reagan says with just a little pushing you'll get the job. In fact, he has an appointment in San Antonio this morning with one of the Barrington trustees."

Creighton got up and closed the door. When he came back to the desk he looked grimly resolved. "Paul, I'm going to lay my cards on the table. I want you to do the same. Okay?"

"Sure, Creighton," Paul said. He was surprised, a bit annoyed, at this sudden turn in the conversation. The implication was plain: this was some sort of showdown, though it was probably nothing more than another of Creighton's petty grievances.

Creighton groped for the right words. "I've — well, you may not think so, but I've worked hard for you this season. I've done my best. You're — excuse me for saying it, but you're such a strange fellow that I've never known for sure how I was doing. I want to know frankly what you think of me as a coach. I've got a right to know."

Paul nodded. "All right, Creighton. You're a good coach. I'm sorry if I ever let you doubt it. You're young, eager, a little headstrong at times. You remind me of myself five years ago. As you say, you've worked hard, and coaching isn't a great deal more than that. You'll move along."

The tension went out of Creighton and he laughed silently. "Well, from you that's practically a citation. I wasn't fishing for compliments anyway. I was wondering if you'd recommend me to the Coulton school board."

Paul understood the situation now. Head job at a triple-A high school was a rare nugget for a man of twenty-five, and Creighton wasn't letting the chance slip by. In rushing here to shake Paul's hand, he was actually congratulating himself.

"Yes, I'll recommend you," Paul said.

Creighton made a flimsy gesture of deprecation. "It's all politics. You know that as well as I do. Experience doesn't count half as much as having the right man put in a word for you. Take your own case at Barrington. Reagan's the key. He can swing it for you if anybody can. You can do the same thing for me here at Coulton." Creighton stood up with a glance at his watch. "Well, I have a Phys Ed class waiting. One last thing, Paul. Let's stick together on this. I don't mean just for now, and I haven't asked this favor for nothing. Later on you'll be needing players at Barrington, and I'll be in a position here to hustle you up some real prospects."

PAUL spent the morning with his diagrams, studying and altering them, trying to find a workable combination now that Bobby Reagan was lost. It was a disheartening task at best.

When the ten-forty bell rang, Mr. Jim came into the office and closed the door. "Paul, I'm going to tell you something I think you ought to know. You haven't been downtown this morning, have you?"

Paul shook his head. "I don't need to. There's a man who tells me everything that happens downtown."

"Yes, I know," Mr. Jim said. "Reagan, our great benefactor. Well, to quote him, it's looking bad downtown, bad. That injury of Bobby's has hurt us worse than we thought. Doesn't it bother you? It could wreck the team — everything we've worked for and accomplished."

"Talk never wrecked anything, Mr. Jim," Paul said. "People who talk don't bother me because people who talk don't act. There's one thing that does bother me, though. Reagan said last night that one of our players had started this talk. Do you know anything about it?"

Mr. Jim looked down at his hands. "Not one of our players, actually. A boy who used to be on the team — WOLFORD REED."

Paul did not recognize the name for a moment. "WOFFIE?" he burst out. "Why that little —"

"Don't say it, Paul. Woffie's a sad case. He's had it pretty rough."

"I don't understand that Woffie," Paul said in a constrained voice. "I've let him hang around the field all season because of that injury. He's a good kid, and yet at the slightest provocation he kicks and bites like an animal. Yesterday, I suppose, I shouldn't have ordered him off the field. And because I did, I guess, he went downtown and started all that talk about DONNIE."

Mr. Jim shook his head. "He didn't start it, Paul. Not really. Yesterday Woffie went downtown — hurt, feeling like an outcast — and the smart boys started pumping him about Bobby. Had he seen it? How had it happened? They'd already made up their minds what to believe, and Woffie was just their way of confirming it. For Woffie, it was a chance to gain attention. Soon he was saying exactly what they wanted him to say."

"One of these days," Paul said thoughtfully, "I'm going to get out of this rotten business."

"I know," Mr. Jim replied. "I've said that a thousand times. But it's a great game, Paul. There's some good left in it."

"It's not a game any more, Mr. Jim. It's a land full of wolves."

"Yes, I'm afraid you're right." Mr. Jim sat silently for a moment, head lowered, arms folded. Without its smile and pleasant glow, his face looked years older — weary, disheartened, resigned.

AFTER the entire squad had assembled in the dressing room that afternoon, Paul rapped for attention, then told them, "Stay inside after you've suited up — all of you."

The players resumed dressing and Paul motioned for Creighton. "Take Donnie outside and keep him busy for a few minutes."

Creighton was immediately curious. "What's up, Paul? Something about yesterday?"

"I'll tell you later."

Several of the players glanced up, also suspecting something, as Creighton and Donnie left the room. Paul stepped onto a locker bench. For several seconds he gazed across the solemn, youthful faces. "I don't know whether you boys have heard the talk around town," he said, "but we're going to set the record straight here and now. Yesterday afternoon Bobby got a bad knee injury when he was tackled by Donnie. You saw it happen. Certain people, who didn't see it happen, are saying that Donnie did it deliberately, that he hit Bobby while his back was turned, after the play was dead."

A low mutter went through the squad.

"Listen to me," Paul commanded. "I don't know who these people are. What they say can never hurt me or you or Donnie or Bobby unless we ourselves begin to think and say it. We don't want any hatred or dissension on this team. There isn't room for it. So we're going to set the record straight. I have a pencil here and a pad and a helmet. We're going to put it to a vote. I want you to leave the room one at a time, and as you leave I want you to write your answer and drop it in the helmet. If you think Donnie deliberately tried to hurt Bobby, I want you to write 'yes.' If you



think it was an accident, I want you to write 'no.' " His eyes moved slowly around the room. "If I receive one 'yes' answer, I'm going to ask Donnie to turn in his suit."

For a moment the players hung back until Ernie Gillis, the big fullback, came shouldering through the crowd. "Give me that pencil, Coach," he said. He scribbled his answer, threw it into the helmet and stalked out. A line formed quickly then, and in minutes the room was empty.

When Paul arrived on field the players gathered around him with deeply troubled faces, their eyes fixed on the upturned helmet under his arm. Donnie was loitering far in the rear. He had obviously been told. "Well, boys," Paul said, "I was just wasting good time." He tilted the helmet and the slips spilled out and were swept away by the gusty wind. "Thirty-one noes. No yeses."

Almost in unison the players grinned. There was a shuffling, a creak of pads as the whole team relaxed at once.

"That was strictly for the record — for the smart boys down town," Paul told them. "I knew what your answer would be. Now let's keep one fact in mind. Whatever people say, we're a team, working together, winning together, standing up for one another. If we have a bit of bad luck, if we lose our quarterback, it doesn't weaken us. It makes us stronger, because we're a team. We all work harder. We fill in the gap. Bad luck can't beat us, talk can't beat us as long as we pull together."

He lifted his voice above the crowd and called, "Donnie, come get your helmet." The ranks parted for Donnie to come through, and Paul handed him the helmet. "Now let's all get to work," he said.

No AMOUNT of talk, he knew, would ever settle the question of a substitute quarterback. Donnie Quillen or James Long? Whatever the answer, it would have a significance now beyond that of a mere choice of players. Donnie — and it would serve to fan the talk, confirm the suspicions. James Long — and it would be a concession to outside influences. It would be against Paul's better judgment, and he knew it.

He settled for James Long temporarily, since the boy had served

as Bobby's substitute all season. But he installed Donnie as quarterback on the second team, and this was the unit he worked with personally when the squads broke apart for dummy drills.

For an hour he went into each huddle, giving a set situation and letting Donnie call it. "You're on your own forty," he would say, "third down, two to go. The Bryan line has been playing tight, the halfbacks in close." Donnie would call the play, and Paul would watch it unfold. During that hour he tried to assure himself that Donnie was the logical choice, that he would work as smoothly at game time as he did at practice. But he knew that in the game Donnie might doubt, might blunder or forget. And in the snap timing of the Coulton attack a fraction's loss was fatal.

Finally he brought the teams together for scrimmage, and he let Donnie do the calling without interruption. Then he started mixing the units. He transferred the backfield first and watched them function with Donnie as their quarterback. Next he brought over the ends for pass plays. Eventually the whole first string had been switched, by such a gradual process that he was hardly aware himself of what had happened until he was watching it in action. This was his Saturday team. It had to be. For two hours he had been working toward that conclusion, knowing all along that there had never been a question in the first place.

The team would miss its Bobby Reagan — his calmness, experience, fine qualities of leadership. But it would gain something in Donnie Quillen which it had never had before — driving strength. Bobby was a delicate craftsman, picking his spots, threading his way. Donnie was a sledge hammer. He had a power and fury that left Paul amazed. The team wasn't as smart without Bobby, but it was tougher, stronger.

Three yards, four yards — this was the kind of team which could beat Bryan High because it could keep pounding, keep moving the ball.

WHEN THE dressing room had cleared after practice, Donnie came over to Paul and stood looking glum and distressed. "Coach," he asked, "did you see Bobby today?"

"Doc Morgan brought him by the house at noon," Paul said.

"They'd just come back from San Antonio. They're giving him therapy baths on the long chance his knee may come around."

Donnie brightened. "You think he may get to play Saturday?"

"I doubt it, Donnie. The way it looks now you're going to be our quarterback. Does that scare you?"

"Yes, sir," Donnie said.

The look on his face reminded Paul of something which he had forgotten of late. Throughout the season rumors had persisted that opponents were "out to get that nigger," and during the first games Donnie had been almost frantic with fear. At the pre-game warm-ups Paul would find him staring at the stands. Before the roaring crowds he was a marked man, and for him the noise and fury were a dreadful reckoning. Something of that blank look of horror was visible on his face now.

Once Paul had cured it by having him stand toe to toe with Ernie Gillis while they slammed their fists against each other's shoulders. Once he had thrown a bottle of cold water in Donnie's face. After the first few games the fear had left him.

"Quarterback is no different from wingback," Paul explained. "There's nothing to be scared of."

Donnie shook his head. "At wingback," he said, "I do what I'm told. I don't have to worry about what play to call. I don't feel right telling the whole team what to do."

"Someone has to tell them, Donnie," Paul reminded. "If you weren't the boy to do it, I wouldn't have you back there. Now is that all that's worrying you?"

"No, sir. What I meant to ask was — Coach, will you take me out to Bobby's house? I haven't seen him since yesterday, and — well, you know what they've been saying. What I mean is, he knows it was an accident, but I want to tell him it was — myself."

Paul nodded. He was tired and hungry, but this was a good deal more important than dinner.

Grace was waiting in the car. Paul kissed her before unlocking the back door for Donnie. "Donnie and I are going to run out to the Reagans' to see Bobby," he said. "I'll take you home."

"I'd rather come along if you don't mind," she said. "I'd enjoy the drive."

When they reached the Reagan ranch, three miles from town, darkness had settled. The porch light came on and R. V. Reagan emerged. "Who is it?" he called. "Paul? Well, this is a surprise! And Grace too." He rushed around to open the door for her. As the light came on he caught a movement in the back seat. For a moment he was silent, and then he said, "Well, boy, I didn't know you were back there. It's hard to see you in the dark."

He shook hands then, with Grace, with Paul, with Donnie. "Bobby will be tickled to death to see you all. I don't flatter myself a minute by thinking you came to see me."

Mrs. Reagan proved to be a small, delicate woman with a soft, southern voice — and now Paul could see why Bobby was so unlike his father. She took Donnie off immediately to see Bobby, leaving the others to follow. In the presence of his wife, Reagan gave the impression of whispering and walking on tiptoe.

Bobby was delighted. He insisted on getting out of bed. When they tried to help him, he waved them aside, hobbled over to a chair and sat down. "You see," he said, "I'm going to be ready to play Saturday. I've been practicing all afternoon. First I could hardly put my weight on it. But after a while it didn't hurt any more." He winked at Donnie. "What do you think of that?"

Donnie's face was beaming. "Boy, that's good news to me," he said. "Coach has had me trying to play quarterback."

It was difficult for Paul to keep from looking at Reagan. He could almost feel the man heating up.

Bobby had fixed his eyes on Paul. "How about it, Coach? Haven't checked out my suit to some other boy, have you?"

Paul smiled, feeling a warmth of admiration for this game, determined boy. "If that knee is well by Saturday," he said, "I'll be the happiest man in Texas. But if it isn't, there'll be other games. You'll never have another knee. Don't rush it."

Bobby wasn't impressed. "Today is Tuesday — four more days until Saturday. I'll bet anything I get to play in that game."

"We'll see," Paul said. "You take it easy."

He began to search for a way to get the adults out of the room. This was Donnie's visit. After a few minutes he managed to lead Reagan out the door in the middle of a conversation while the

women went off in the opposite direction on a tour of the house.

Alone with Paul, Reagan's face began clouding. On the wide front porch he stood inhaling the cold night air. "Well, Paul," he said finally, "I begged you not to do it."

Paul knew what he meant, but he said, "Do what, Mr. Reagan?"

"Play that Negro at quarterback." Reagan's voice had a petulant, injured tone. "We're coming to that, I know. Ten years from now we'll have Negroes in our churches, our clubs. But I'm afraid of it now. Let's not go too fast with this thing. He's already on the team. That ought to be enough for one season."

Paul wouldn't let himself be provoked. "Mr. Reagan, I'm not trying to make a civil-rights case out of this thing," he said. "I'm just a football coach. Donnie happens to be the best choice I've got now that Bobby's out."

"Well, let's not worry about it," Reagan said placatingly. "You heard what Bobby said in there. He's going to be ready Saturday. I'll give you my word on that."

He had been lighting a cigar as he talked. "I had a talk with Mr. Buckner today — Wilson Buckner, from Barrington College."

"Oh?"

Reagan puffed his cigar. "How'd you like to be head coach at Barrington?" He made it sound as if he had already arranged the matter.

Paul laughed. "You mean how'd I like to make eight thousand a year?"

"Ten thousand," Reagan corrected. "They want you, Paul. No doubt about it. This Coulton team has made you. I intend to do everything I can to help you get that job."

"Thanks, I appreciate it."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic."

Paul sighed. "Mr. Reagan, I've got a lot of things on my mind this week. Barrington College is just one of them. If they still want me next Monday, I guarantee you I'll be enthusiastic. I'll also be deeply grateful for what you're doing."

"No thanks necessary," Reagan assured him. "When I like a man I feel duty-bound to do everything I can for him. I've been pulling for you since the day you came to Coulton."

The Reagan veranda looked down into the wide, shallow Coulton Valley where a thousand lights were small and flakelike beneath the cold brilliance of a winter moon. "I was born on this hill, Paul," Reagan said. "Coulton's the only world I know. Every time I look at it, I know it's my town and I couldn't want a finer one. My father helped stake it out. I grew up with Coulton. Bobby was born in the hospital down there six weeks after it was opened. Do you wonder why I love the town?"

"No," Paul said. "I knew a town like Coulton once. I had to forget it when I started coaching."

"People will tell you it's not important," Reagan said pensively. "Things like being loyal to your home town and doing what you can to help it. Things like winning a football game. But it is, Paul. Winning that game Saturday is the most important thing in the world. Don't ask me why. Pride, loyalty, ambition — it's all those things. It's having your town seen and respected and talked about — just having it win. That's the word. Nothing else describes it."

SEEING the car cross in front of him on the highway, Paul could not be sure. He recognized the driver, but his lights caught only a flicker of the woman's face. His foot came off the accelerator, and Grace, always fearful of an accident, snapped erect beside him. He drove on, forcing himself not to look back at the car disappearing into the lane. He made a mental note of the spot, and after Grace had relaxed he glanced at his watch. Seven forty-five.

With luck he could be back in thirty minutes. He had to drop Donnie at his father's service station and take Grace home and think of some excuse to make to her. Thirty minutes might be too late, but it was something to do. It was better than waiting.

He arrived back at the lane at eight seventeen. He drove about a hundred yards past it, coasting to a stop in a shallow ditch across the highway where shadows would conceal his car. Getting out, he walked back to the lane, hemmed with its rows of brush and mesquite. At the entrance he stopped cautiously and looked in.

The car was a hundred feet away. He could hear muffled talk. He was seeking a way to move closer when the motor started and the car began backing out of the lane. He dropped flat, looking

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frantically for a hiding place, and rolled into a small culvert a moment before the car growled past him. It stopped, and for a breathless instant he thought that the driver had seen him, but he was waiting for a truck to pass on the highway.

As the car angled out to the pavement, Paul had a full view of the woman's face in the open window. In the heavy moonlight there was no mistaking her. It was Helen Jenkins.

Mitch Mitchell and Helen Jenkins!

Long after the car was gone, he sat on the culvert taking the problem apart and examining it. Could this possibly be why Bolin had recognized him at the motel that fateful night? Had he been expecting him? Was that why Mitchell had hung around the gym — why Helen had struck up a convenient friendship with Grace? Bolin, Mitchell and Helen Jenkins — had they planned it that way from the beginning, waiting patiently for weeks, maintaining their contacts until the time was right? Was Saturday the pay-off? With the evidence now available, what else could he believe?

Crossing to his car, he remembered, with a surge of regret, that he had tipped his hand to Mitchell that morning. In doing so he had spoiled his last chance — to stall them until the game was over, then resign his coaching job. If he had played it smart, he might have been able to hurt them as badly as they were going to hurt him. Instead he had behaved like an outraged schoolboy, sputtering, blustering, being defiant and remorseful by turns.

Well, he'd asked for it, and he was going to get it. Tomorrow — Thursday at the latest — prints of that picture would be all over town. By Saturday Coulton would be in such an uproar that the game would hardly matter. Paul Watson was going to be thrown to the wolves. Grace was going to be shocked and humiliated. Their years of waiting, working, hoping were going to be shattered by one evil blow, and there was nothing he could do about it.

He could call Bolin, he realized. Probably it wasn't too late. Mitchell and Helen may have been holding a strategy meeting of some sort, so the pictures probably hadn't been mailed. If it weren't for Grace, he wouldn't even consider the idea. But he had to decide — now, tonight — exactly what he was going to do, and he had to stick to that decision no matter what happened.

THE TABLE was set when he reached home. With a deep sense of guilt he went to the bedroom in search of Grace and found her asleep. Lifting her into his arms, he kissed her and said, "Don't be frightened. I'm your husband, in case you've forgotten."

Her laugh was thick and drowsy. "I remember you, vaguely. Back before the football season we used to have dinner together every night."

"Cheer up, darling," he said. "The season ends on Saturday."

She reached up and caught his face with her hands. "I do wish I weren't so useless to you. This is the biggest week of your life. I ought to be on the sideline cheering every minute."

"You're always there," he assured her.

He stood and extended his hands to help her to her feet. In her formless maternity clothes she looked, incongruously, like a child. He had known her seven years. In that time he had himself aged greatly, or so it seemed to him, under the pressures of his career. And yet it was she who had matured — wise, calm, hopeful, never at odds with the world — while he had grown irritable and untrustworthy.

He loved her now, and always had, with such deep conviction that he would spend the rest of his life wondering why he had been so weak as to think of betraying her.

"Did it ever occur to you," he asked, "that I might not be a football coach for the rest of my life?"

She gazed into his face, surprised at the abruptness of the question. "No, I'd never thought of that. Why did you ask?"

"I was thinking that a coach's wife is the next thing to a widow. It's not much fun for you. And to be honest it's not much fun for me, not any more. It used to be, back in the little towns when it didn't make a great deal of difference whether the team won or not. Football was just a game then and I was just a man with a job. I used to look forward to the games. I enjoyed watching them. Now I go out to the field, not to watch the game and enjoy it, but to win, knowing that every week more and more people are expecting it. When it gets that big and that serious, it's not a game any more. It's a hard, dirty business."

She touched her lips to his cheek. "Of course it's a dirty business,

especially at nine o'clock without any dinner. Come here a minute."

Holding his hand, she led him to the bulletin board on the opposite wall. She lifted one of the programs and turned it open. COULTON COWBOYS vs. BIG CANYON BEARS, it read. Inside she had filled in the final score: *Coulton 34, Big Canyon 13.*

"Remember that one?" she asked. "Remember what you said?" She mocked him with a doleful prophecy. "'We can't possibly beat Big Canyon. Coulton hasn't beaten Big Canyon in ten years. This is the end of the line.'" Then she laughed. "Oh, Paul, you have such a small opinion of yourself. But, tell me, was that a dirty business, or wasn't it a bit of fun too? You were proud of that, weren't you?"

He squirmed and grinned, grudgingly pleased. "You and that bulletin board," he said.

"And here —" she was laughing again "— oh, this is the one!" She found a news clipping and read, "*Write the name Paul Watson in your little black book. He'll hit the big time in a few more years. He may even become a legend. Football was becoming a dull T party until Watson and his Coulton Cowboys came riding out of the west. Down San Antonio way they call him —*" she took deadly aim and fired the words at him "*Watson the Wizard.*"

"I could kill the guy who wrote that," he said fiercely.

"You love it. You know you do." She was quickly serious again. "So do I, Paul. And I'm very, very proud. The important thing isn't that you're beginning to make a name for yourself, but that you're doing it with loyalty and decency and hard work. Don't you see? Football is certainly more than a game now. But it's never a dirty game, as you insist, unless you make it that way."

He was washing for dinner when the phone rang and he was suddenly sure that the call was from Bolin or Mitchell — that the decision would have to be made now.

"Is this Paul Watson?" a man's soft, unhurried voice asked.

"Yes."

"This is Mitchell." There was a momentary pause. "Look, Watson, I've been thinking about this morning — about what you said. I think we ought to have a little talk."

Paul drew his breath in slowly. It wasn't too late. The pictures

hadn't been sent. All he had to do was swing back in line. As simple as that. The team was going to be beaten anyway. Then he remembered Grace's words: *But it's never a dirty game unless you make it that way.*

"Mitchell," he said slowly, "I don't have anything to say to you that I haven't said already. You and Bolin can go to hell."

"Well, I guess you know what you're doing," Mitchell said.

"I know exactly what I'm doing," Paul replied. "Don't try to contact me again."

He put the phone on its cradle and stood listening. Grace had the radio playing in the kitchen and was humming the music. The sound of her voice and the smell of hot coffee gave him a sudden feeling of comfort and security. For an awful moment the decision had seemed wrong. But it didn't now and never would, whatever the consequences.

CHAPTER 5

WHEN HE arrived at school Wednesday morning Paul went directly to his office to check the mail, expecting that there might be some sort of threat or last appeal from Bolin. There wasn't. Nor was Mitchell anywhere around the gym.

A knock sounded at the door shortly after nine. The caller proved to be only a middle-aged woman who looked lost and ill at ease in such surroundings. "Are you Coach Watson?" she asked.

"I am." He held the door wide, and she came into the office in a hesitant way. "I want to talk to you about my son," she said.

Paul understood now. She was a football mother. They visited him rarely, these women, always with an irate complaint about how their boys were being neglected or abused. He said in a detached, professional tone, "Well, now you're Mrs. —"

"Reed," she told him.

"Reed? Oh, yes," he said, remembering, "Woffie's mother." She nodded. "I came to talk to you about him."

Paul waited for her to go on. She seemed to be gathering her strength as if speaking would be a great ordeal. "All right, Mrs. Reed," he said, "what about him?"

"He's a good boy, Woliford is," she told him defensively. "For the chance he's had, I reckon he's as good a boy as you could want. His father never tried to do right — and one day he just up and left us. I've had to make the living as best I could, and Woliford's sort of run wild. I never worried about him, though, because I could tell he was a good boy. And then — Monday night it was — he came home drunk. Imagine! Woliford's not like that. He's lost and mixed up — that's all. And it's mostly because of that knee. He wanted to play football. Ever since he was ten years old that was all he could talk about. But now he's taken up with a crowd that hangs around them places on Railroad Street, drinking and acting tough. That's what it's come down to, all because of football and that knee."

"About that knee, Mrs. Reed —" Paul felt an urgent need to clarify the matter. "Woffie — Woliford wasn't injured on my team. It happened last year, before I was coach here."

She nodded. "I know. I didn't come here to accuse you. I told Woliford he shouldn't try to play football anyway, that he was too little. After he was hurt, I said, 'Well, there you are. You wouldn't listen to your mother.' But he still talked about it all the time and he said that even if he couldn't play any more he could help the other boys. That way, he said, he'd still be a part of the team. Any time I tried to get him to stay home, he said no, he couldn't because they was depending on him for help out at the practice field. Tuesday morning I said to him, 'Woliford, are you still helping coach the football team?' No, he said, he wasn't. In fact, he said, he was going to quit school because he'd found a job down on Railroad Street. 'Why, Woliford,' I said, 'they're depending on you out at the football field.' You should have seen the look on his face. 'Me?' he said. 'Who you trying to fool?' Then he went into the bedroom and latched the door, and I could hear him in there bawling like a baby."

Paul had been listening without looking at the woman. He glanced at her now. "I'd be glad to help," he told her. "What should I do?"

"You're like a father to Woliford," she said. "You should hear all the things he's said about you. He says you're the greatest football coach that ever lived. I think if you'd have a talk with him and

tell him he don't have no cause to go acting like he's doing, drinking and smarting around, maybe he'd straighten up again."

"All right," Paul said. "I'll have a talk with him."

The woman was silent a moment. "He thinks he's no good any more because of that broken knee, that nobody wants him. But it ain't the knee. It's more like a broken heart, like he just sort of gave up all of a sudden. And I don't see why."

HIS FIRST reaction after the woman was gone was to decide that this was the kind of problem that Mr. Jim would know how to handle. Then he was ashamed of himself for wanting to unload it on the old man. The nine-forty bell rang, and he saw Ernie Gillis shambling along. Paul called him over. "Is Woffie in school today?"

Ernie shook his head. "Mr. Forrest was asking about him this morning. He wasn't here yesterday either. I hear he's quit and is working down on Railroad Street, at Hack Harper's."

The name called to Paul's mind the Thursday-night Quarterback Club meetings. Hack Harper, a pompous, frog-faced man, was always in attendance. He was an avid football fan. Paul remembered him because he had a needling way of asking questions about last week's game. "What kind of place does Hack run?" he asked.

"Swap shop," Ernie said. "You know — buys and repairs old junk stuff. Woffie's probably down at Hack's right now."

RAILROAD STREET was a decaying row of taverns, pool halls and secondhand shops. Hack Harper's store was on a corner, and its front was littered with pots, tables, lariats, saddle blankets, even an ancient fold-top perambulator.

Inside, Hack was reclining on a worn auto seat, surrounded by piles of outdated comic books and pulp magazines. He pumped Paul's hand. "Coach, it's a pleasure to see you," he said. He grinned and winked. "Looking for bargains or just visiting?"

"Visiting, I suppose," Paul said. "I'm also looking for Wofford Reed."

"Woffie? Well, I sent him out to get me some smokes. He'll be back directly." Hack's jowled face looked slyly amused. "What's the matter? They wondering about him at school?"

"I wouldn't know," Paul said.

"Well, it won't do them no good to wonder. He's seventeen. They can't make him go to school now if he don't want to."

Paul didn't bother to answer. He walked out the door. Several minutes passed before he saw Woffie approaching from the direction of Main Street. He went to meet him, expecting sullenness, but when Woffie saw him he grinned, waved and hastened his strides.

"Hey, Coach, what are you doing down at this end of town?"

"Waiting for you," Paul said. "You haven't been at school. I was wondering why."

"Yeah, well — tell you, Coach, I dropped out. I called it quits." Evasive at first, Woffie's voice gradually grew firm. "What I did, I thought it over, and I decided I was just wasting time in school. I never was much with books anyway, and the only reason I studied was because I was planning to go into the Navy when I was eighteen, because in the Navy you can really get a good deal if you're a high-school graduate. Well, I can't get in the Navy now. So why bother? Old Hack, he's going to teach me how to repair bicycles and stuff. I can make forty, fifty bucks a week —" Woffie snapped his fingers "— just like that. Pretty good for a guy with a bum knee, huh, Coach?"

There was a decisive tone in Woffie's words that seemed to wrap up the matter. Paul was left dangling, forgetting what, if anything, he had intended to say. Finally he said, "Well, I thought maybe you'd quit because of what happened at the field Monday. If so, I wanted you to know I'm sorry I lost my temper. You can come back if you want to." It was easier to say than he had expected.

"Nah." Woffie waved a hand. "Listen, you did me a favor Monday. I'd been hanging around, getting in the way, still thinking I belonged on the football team. It was the same as thinking I was still going in the Navy. No, sir, you put me wise to myself, Coach, and you don't need to feel sorry about that. I know where I stand now." He had been sidling away, dismissing himself by degrees. "Well, I got to be getting to work," he said. "Take it easy, Coach."

"Okay, Woffie," Paul said. "Good luck."

He watched the boy hobble down the street and turn into Hack's store. Inside the car, Paul had turned on the switch before he finally

thought of something. He was undecided for a moment, not sure that the offer would have any effect on Woffie.

He went back to the store. Woffie was in the back, stirring a can of paint, and he began grinning when he saw Paul.

"Something else I wanted to tell you," Paul said. "They're going to broadcast the game Saturday, you know. They've asked me for a spotter. I thought you might like the job."

Woffie brimmed over. "You mean up there in the press box, up on top of the stadium?"

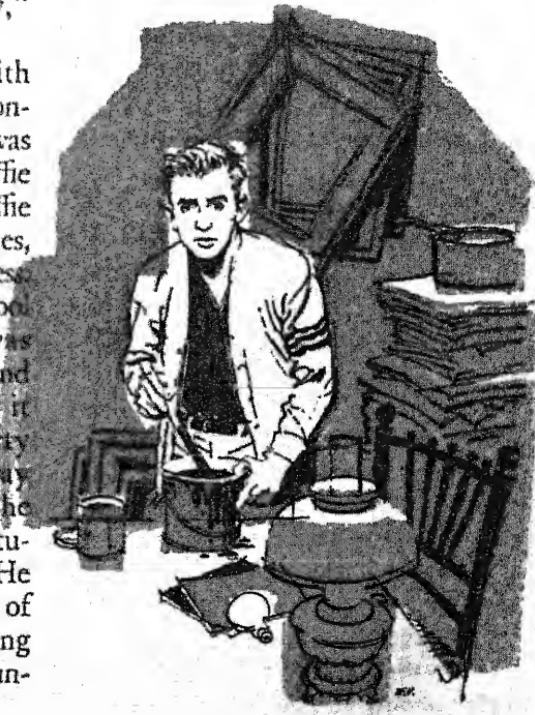
Paul nodded. "A spotter needs to watch the team at practice," he explained. "He needs to know the players and their numbers — that's all. He has to be a schoolboy." He paused, then said, "You're splashing paint on the table."

Woffie gazed dumbly at the sloshed-over can. He took a rag and began dabbing the table, his face shrouded in thought.

"Well, take it easy," Paul said.

He left the store with the feeling that his conscience, such as it was, was clear. He had seen Woffie and apologized. If Woffie wanted to repair bicycles, that was strictly his business.

He drove back to school believing that he was through with Woffie and the enigma of him. But it wasn't so. At two forty that afternoon on his way to the main building, he saw a distant group of students changing classes. He stopped and stared. One of them was Woffie, trudging dutifully along, books under his arm.



An hour later Woffie arrived at the practice field, apparently not a whit changed by the whole experience. When the scrimmage session started, he edged up beside Paul. "Hi, Coach. I decided to come back to school."

"That's good," Paul said.

A few moments later, when Paul shouted a criticism at one of the players, Woffie sang out in chorus, "Yah, you better watch it there, boy."

Paul drew up his shoulders and gritted his teeth. He turned blistering eyes upon Woffie, and Woffie looked dismayed. "You — uh — want me to stay over at the sideline, Coach?" he asked. "I can watch and start memorizing the numbers. It's going to be a big job, you know, memorizing all those numbers."

Paul closed his eyes and nodded. "Please do," he said. "You'll be much, much safer over at the sideline."

PAUL had forgotten the impending Big Canyon school-board meeting. When Milton Forrest phoned him at six thirty that evening, he had just arrived home from the practice field, wearied and disheartened by the team's performance. He wanted leisure and a long night's sleep, but he told Forrest he would be ready at seven.

The other superintendents and coaches of the district were already on hand when Paul and Forrest arrived. Paul knew all of them and was on fairly close terms with the coaches.

John Golden of Big Canyon in particular was his friend. He had keen respect for the man, deriving no less from friendship than from the reputation Golden had acquired in eight years of coaching. Moreover, he was indebted to him for having gone out of his way to be helpful during those first uncertain weeks in Coulton.

Paul had been there less than a week when Golden drove over to introduce himself. His manner was gruff, his speech direct. Like Paul, he was absorbed in the game itself and pointedly indifferent to the noise and politics surrounding it.

"Don't worry," he had told Paul that first day. "It's not a tough district and Coulton's not used to winning. You'll do okay."

"Any district with Big Canyon in it is bound to be tough," Paul had replied.

Golden shook his head. "Not this year, Paul. All my boys graduated. I have three lettermen back and I'm on the spot. Every team in the district is laying for me."

It was his opinion that Tonkawa was the team to beat. He drew a notebook from his pocket and began diagraming that school's basic plays. He was likely to do this, Paul found, any time he talked about football.

As they talked that day the diagrams had piled up on Paul's desk — of Tonkawa, then of the Lansbury and Arroyo teams. Paul was amazed and deeply grateful. It was the data of a dozen scouting reports all neatly capsule and served to him in a single casual session. Golden presented it without a hint of antagonism toward the other schools. He was simply a fellow coach offering the facts he knew. "It helps to have a line on your district," he said.

The experts had agreed with John that Tonkawa was this year's team, until Coulton upset Mainsfield in the last week of nondistrict play. Then, to his shock and dismay, Paul found his own team rated high as a title favorite. At that point Tonkawa, Coulton and Big Canyon were all undefeated. Tonkawa, with a veteran squad, was riding high, and Golden, as always, was bringing his Big Canyon Bears slowly, methodically to top form.

Next Friday all interest centered on the Tonkawa-Coulton game, and tiny Cowboy Field almost burst its seams. Paul went out that night with dread in his heart. "This is it," he told Grace darkly. "Yep, this is the end of the line."

But it was just one of those nights. Every time Tonkawa fumbled, a Coulton player pounced on the ball. Every time a red flag flew, Tonkawa lost yardage. Bobby Reagan came out firing passes in the first seconds and he never stopped hitting. Petey Gonzales caught three for touchdowns. With the defense spread out, Ernie Gillis started slamming the line, getting five or ten yards on every thrust. When the wild night was over, Coulton had it, 40 to 27.

Big Canyon had an open date and John Golden was on hand to scout Tonkawa. He came into the dressing room after the game, grinning and shaking his head. "No, sir," he told Paul, "never again. I refuse to tell you anything else about football. From now on you're supposed to tell me." He was the rarest of men: a coach

who was sincerely pleased with another's success. "I can forgive you all but one thing," he said. "You've made Tonkawa fighting mad. They'll slaughter us."

But next week Big Canyon hit full stride and brushed past Tonkawa by the eye-popping margin of 35-7. Paul was jolted but he was also relieved. The spotlight was off Coulton now. As the race entered the November stretch, Big Canyon was again a solid favorite.

For the next two weeks Paul pointed toward the showdown with Big Canyon, running Golden's plays at scrimmage, concentrating his attack on the soft spots he had observed. With his team honed to its finest edge and with the drums beating loudly, he went to Big Canyon fully believing that they could clear this last and biggest hurdle. But it figured to be a close, hard game. No one, not even the wildest Coulton optimist, expected Big Canyon to lose by three touchdowns.

A partisan crowd sat stunned when Donnie Quillen, on the second play from scrimmage, took a lateral pass and swept seventy yards to score. Paul saw almost immediately what Big Canyon was doing — concentrating on Bobby, trying to prevent his passing — but he couldn't believe at first that Golden was gambling to this extent. Later, as the margin widened, he realized that Golden had known his team was outmatched and that his moves had been those of desperation from the start. It was 34-0 when Paul sent in his subs.

The Big Canyon partisans never recovered from the opening shock. They lingered in massive, ominous quietness until all hope was gone and then, as if the burden were too great to bear, they began filing out of the stadium. By game's end a disgusting number of them had abandoned their team to its fate.

Afterward Paul visited Golden in the dressing room. He had never before felt remorseful in victory, but there was definitely a bitter aftertaste to this one. Golden was his friend and mentor. It seemed unfair, treacherous in fact, to have beaten and humbled him in such degree.

Golden was sitting on a dressing table, head bowed, looking as tired as any of his players. But when he saw Paul, he smiled. "Well,

I was expecting it," he said. "I did think we'd make a better game of it, though."

"We caught you on an off night," Paul assured him.

Golden shook his head. "No, Paul. You've got the best-coached team I've seen in years. It's poised, it's quick and smart. It hits you in the right place every time. It's a pleasure to watch a team like that even when they're beating you." His voice was frank in admiration. "I'm proud of you, Paul. Your boys deserved to win."

ANYWHERE it was played, football engendered partisanship and prejudice. Behind the music, cheers and banners there was always a poisonous core of fanaticism, displeased, unpleasable, awaiting its chance to corrupt.

Yet it was unthinkable that a man like John Golden would be fired for losing one ball game, even in a town like Big Canyon. Even after the superintendent, Curtis Stollins, had briefed them on the situation, Paul continued to believe stubbornly that the whole affair was absurd and that the best solution was to ignore it. "Before we go into the meeting," Stollins told his colleagues, "I think you ought to know how things stand and what's likely to develop. There's no doubt that John is on the rack and that this meeting was called tonight in hopes of taking action against him. A certain element downtown —" Stollins spread out his hands with a faint, sardonic smile. "You know the breed. You have them in your own towns. Any time they are beaten they have to make excuses for it. Somebody has to be blamed. For three weeks now they've been piling the blame on John. First they said he did a poor job preparing the team for the Coulton game. Then they decided he'd been doing a poor job all season. But they didn't let it die there. Next thing we heard was that John was drunk the night of the Coulton game, that he abused the players at halftime."

A couple of the coaches laughed derisively at the mere suggestion of this. Golden was noted for his mildness and temperance.

"It sounds ridiculous, of course," Stollins said, "but that's not the worst of it. The rumor began circulating that John was involved with one of the elementary teachers. You've heard talk like that before. When they can't drag you down by any other means, they

always resort to that. It's vulgar enough to get repeated, ugly enough to impress the mothers and it's too vile and embarrassing for open denial. Well, they began pressuring the board, and as of now I'd say it's touch and go. Several of the board members are still on the fence. They know they can't fire John without giving their town a black eye. That's why I invited you here tonight. I don't want you to talk up. They'd resent it. But your presence at the meeting is sure to affect them. It may scare them out of taking action."

The meeting did not begin until nearly eight thirty. The Big Canyon trustees arrived on time, but when they saw the stern delegation of schoolmen, they stopped in surprise, looking sheepish and confused, before withdrawing into the corridor for a lengthy, low-voiced caucus. Finally they came back, their faces worried but resolved, and the meeting was called to order. They dragged it out — filling an elementary teaching vacancy, authorizing bids on a new bus, wrangling over expenditures — but by nine thirty they were hard pressed for reasons to stay in session. Occasionally one of them would glance back at the visitors as if hoping that they would soon give up and go home.

It was ten o'clock when the chairman tapped his knuckles on the desk, saying, "Any further business?" and was answered by silence. "Bill, you're mighty quiet." The chairman looked at one of the members coaxingly. "Don't you have something to say?"

"Well, I — uh — uh —" the man floundered, trying to remember the right words "— I move we meet in executive session."

Curtis Stollins sprang to his feet. He was violently enraged now. "No, you don't!" he cried. "I thought you'd try a trick like that. If you're going to fire John Golden, at least have the guts to do it in open session."

The chairman regarded him in pained surprise. "Why, Curt, nobody's mentioned firing John Golden." His voice was so innocent in tone that the mockery was barely audible. He tapped his knuckles on the desk. "The motion has been made that we meet in executive session. Do I hear a second?"

"Second the motion," someone said.

"I'm not leaving, Harry," Stollins said fiercely. "If you want

these other gentlemen to leave, they will. But the only way you're going to get rid of me is to fire me or throw me out."

The chairman eyed him for a moment, still pained, still patient, indulgent, smiling. "Motion is made and seconded that we meet in executive session," he said. "All in favor —"

Four hands went up.

The chairman seemed amused. He looked again at Stollins, who was still on his feet glaring at him, then at the visitors, who were beginning to stir uncertainly. "Come back to see us, gentlemen," he said pleasantly. "Always glad to have visitors."

"Go ahead," Stollins told them. "Wait outside if you like. You too, John. This is my fight."

They settled down to wait in a room across the corridor. John Golden sat in the far corner, silent, uncommunicative, head lowered upon his chest. There was no anger on his face, only resignation. Each time Paul glanced at him he felt an overwhelming pity mingled with incredulity. Was it possible for those seven petty men locked in their secret huddle to smear and ruin a man like John Golden?

He knew it was — all true, all possible. And he knew that if Golden, the strongest and best among them, could fall this quickly and ignominiously, with never a chance to defend himself, the rest of them were doomed as well. Have a bad streak, lose the wrong game; the axe was always waiting.

When Stollins came out of the meeting shortly after eleven, his face was drawn and tired. He looked defeated, and a single shake of his head confirmed the fact. "I'm sorry, John," he said. "I tried my best."

The others watched Golden, expecting and even hoping that his reaction would be explosive and bitter. Instead, he seemed relieved to have the matter ended. "Well, boys, let's go home," he said. "It's getting late. I want to thank you — all of you — for coming here tonight. I'm grateful for your help, and I'm sorry you had such a long trip for nothing."

"It wasn't for nothing," one of the coaches said resolutely. "We'll blackball Big Canyon for this. We'll vote them out of the district."

Golden gave this momentary thought. "No. That's a poor kind

of revenge. It won't help me. It'll just hurt the school and the students." He looked at Stollins. "Did they state their reasons? Was I still drunk, still chasing a woman?"

"No, fortunately they didn't," Stollins replied. "They argued for an hour and finally brought it to a vote. It wasn't unanimous. Jake Hynes and Charlie Windom stuck with you all the way."

"Well, that's some comfort," Golden said. "I'll see them and thank them — tomorrow, not tonight."

He squared his shoulders, as if a severe load had finally been lifted. "Well, thanks again," he said. He went out the door and the room was silent. They listened to his heavy footsteps pass down the corridor, out into the night.

PAUL and Milton Forrest were in the corridor saying good night to Stollins when the board meeting finally adjourned. They stopped talking and watched as five of the trustees filed past, silently and rather hurriedly, on their way to the front door.

A moment later the chairman and the sixth member came out, their heads bent close in conversation. When the chairman saw Paul, he called, "Watson, could we talk to you a minute?"

Paul's jaw dropped. He looked at Forrest and Stollins, who were as surprised as he. He dug his hands into his pockets and walked over to the man, who led him into the room and closed the door. "Now," he said, "I'm Harry Densman. And this is Bill McIntyre."

Paul nodded a curt greeting. He kept his hands in his pockets.

"Don't hold it against us for what we had to do tonight," the chairman said soothingly. "Golden got himself in trouble and then refused to take the easy way out. I begged him to resign. We'd gladly have given him a clean record, a full recommendation. But, no, he had to make it hard on everybody."

Paul reached for the doorknob. "Was that all you wanted to tell me?" he asked.

"Not quite," the chairman said. "I wanted to tell you that we have a coaching vacancy." It was a calculated understatement, meant to be humorous and to thaw the frosty air.

"So I hear," Paul answered.

"It's a juicy plum for somebody. The salary's under six thousand,

of course, but the boys downtown always chip in with a little extra — say three or four thousand for a good year. We thought you might be interested."

It was bald and direct and infinitely disgusting. "I have a job," Paul said. "I'm not interested in the boys downtown."

An amused grin spread over the chairman's face. "Why, Watson, you're jumping to conclusions. We weren't even considering you for the job. We just want the word passed along that we've got a big opportunity here for the right man. With what we have to offer, we intend to hire the best coach in the business."

Paul fixed him with an icy stare. "You just fired the best coach in the business."

A flicker of anger passed across the chairman's face. "Oh, Golden was all right as long as he kept his mind on the game," he said. "But when he started chasing around with that teacher, he ruined himself in a hurry. A football coach is supposed to set an example. You see, Watson, you coaches may think you're tin gods, but you're just public servants with a reputation to uphold. Any time you make a mistake, you're going to have to pay for it."

CHAPTER 6

ON THURSDAY morning there was still no word from Bolin, still no sign of Mitchell around the gym. For Paul the waiting was almost unbearable now. He sat numbly at his desk, knowing all hope was past and wondering if there were some way to prepare himself. At any moment between now and Saturday the trustees might confront him with the damning evidence. It was like waiting for a bomb to explode.

"Paul!"

Lost in thought, he had forgotten the open door, and the word was fired point-blank. He spun about in the chair, and R. V. Reagan overflowed with laughter. "Nerves, Paul, nerves. They're getting you down."

He was in enormous good spirits, and Paul, glancing past him into the corridor, saw the reason. Bobby was there, leaning on a cane, and teammates were beginning to collect joyfully around him.

"Look at that," Reagan said, beaming. "He could run for governor, that boy. We're on our way to San Antonio with Doc Morgan, for another one of those therapy baths. Doc said that one yesterday was practically a miracle cure. He said if Bobby keeps improving at the same rate — cross your fingers, Paul — he should be able to play Saturday."

"If he doesn't get trampled first," Paul said. He moved to the door and called in his severe, drill-field voice, "Get back, get back. You want to cripple him for life?"

Under his frowning eye the crowd slowly dispersed, leaving Bobby and a few teammates around the door.

"I don't know why I'm so tickled," Robin Mitchell said. "If he plays, I don't. And if I don't play —" Robin's face was twisted in mock distress "— I can't score a touchdown. And if I can't score a touchdown I can't make a hundred dollars."

This drew whoops from the other players. "You're crazy," Ernie Gillis said. "Who's paying a hundred dollars for a touchdown? Don't you know if you take money for playing it makes you a professional and the whole team gets kicked out of the league?"

"Nuts," Robin said. "Not from my own dad, it doesn't. He says he's been waiting two years to see me score a touchdown. If I score one Saturday he'll give me a hundred dollars, only I can't spend it until I go off to college."

"He can't take money from anybody, can he, Coach?" Gillis insisted.

Paul was looking hard at Robin. "When did your dad tell you that?" he asked.

Robin's expression changed. He was worried now. "This morning," he said. "But I didn't say I'd take it. Anyway I bet they can't do anything to you for taking a gift from your own father. Can they, Coach?"

"Certainly not," Paul said. "You take him up on that."

"Wish my old man had that kind of money," Ernie Gillis said ruefully.

EACH Thursday night the Coulton Quarterback Club met in the high-school auditorium. It had no purpose other than to praise,

analyze and consecrate the Coulton football team. As head coach Paul was always the main speaker. He was usually questioned at length about the previous week's game. Later a football movie would be shown and refreshments would be served in the cafeteria.

Paul had come to dread these sessions. He disliked being a target for fathers who thought their sons weren't playing often enough, for fanatics who expected not only victories but lopsided scores in the bargain. As he was dressing for the meeting the phone rang. He had learned to expect the worst from that telephone. All week it had rung, and not once had it brought him good news.

The caller was Morris Anderson, president of the Quarterback Club and also a member of the school board. "Listen, Paul," he said. "The Quarterbacks aren't meeting. It's been called off."

"I didn't know that."

"Well, it — we just decided at the last minute." Anderson's voice was wary and evasive. "Something's come up. If you don't mind, I'd like to come by for you. Say — in fifteen minutes?"

"I'm ready now."

He put the phone down and went back into the bathroom.

Well, this was it. The pictures had finally come. The thing to do, he decided, was to type out a letter of resignation. If there was to be an immediate meeting of the board, he had to be ready for it. He would tell them the whole story, including the fact that Bolin was trying to fix the game. He would point out that he could have gone along with it and no one would ever have known, but that he had chosen to be honest instead. He would offer no apologies. But he would ask them to keep the matter quiet until he and his wife could leave town — not for his sake, but for Grace's.

When he went to the bedroom for his typewriter, he found Grace seated at the dressing table powdering her face. "What are you doing?" he demanded, then instantly chided himself for showing his nervousness.

"Doing? Why, I'm trying to look presentable."

"Who for?"

"For anyone I happen to see. For you, if you're interested."

He took the typewriter to the kitchen and dashed off the letter. He was signing it when Anderson's car stopped outside.

Anderson was not alone. Peering through the blinds into the heavy twilight, Paul saw three car doors open almost simultaneously. He recognized Anderson, then Milton Forrest, then R. V. Reagan. His heart began pounding. This was going to be nasty.

He took the typewriter back to the bedroom, telling Grace curtly, "I'll grab something to eat downtown."

"Wait, Paul." She came to him, smiling, and straightened his tie. "Now, kiss me," she commanded.

He pecked her lips.

"Be a good boy, darling." Her eyes were dancing as he went to greet the men at the door.

The meeting was formal and a little strained. As soon as they were in the car, Reagan said, with such a falseness of voice that it could only have been prearranged, "Morris, as long as we're out here in the new section, let's have a look at those houses you're building."

Paul slumped in the seat. It was to be not only an ordeal, he realized, but a drawn-out one. The athletic committee was probably in session right now. Reagan, Anderson and Forrest had been detailed to keep him ready for the appointed hour — whenever that should be. He had dealt with enough officials of their type to know that they would make every effort to appear casual and friendly up to the moment of confrontation.

As they drove they talked inevitably of the game. Reagan said there was no doubt in his mind now, Bobby was going to play — even Doc Morgan was optimistic. Forrest said that Bryan officials were expecting a gate of more than twenty thousand. Anderson said he'd be willing to bet that five thousand of them would be Coulton fans; he'd never seen anything like the excitement this game was causing.

In the early darkness they stumbled over the scrap lumber and ruptured earth around Anderson's block of new houses on the outskirts of town. After a while Paul saw Anderson look at his watch and then he began herding them to the car. On the way back to town they made a lame effort at conversation before settling into heavy silence. No doubt about it now — the atmosphere was strained.

They pulled directly up to the Flinders Hotel, which confused

Paul. Anderson jumped out, and opened the back door. "Move, Paul," he snapped. "Let's go."

Paul got out slowly and looked around. The three men were grinning and this made him even more sullen and distrustful. "What's the idea?" he demanded. "Is this some sort of joke?"

"Grab his arm, Bob," Anderson said to Reagan.

With Anderson on one side, Reagan on the other, Paul was rushed into the hotel lobby. Before them were heavy oak doors and a sign: Cactus Room.

"Halt!" Anderson commanded. Reagan jerked a football whistle from his pocket and gave a shrill blast, and faces popped from behind newspapers all over the lobby. The doors swung open.

Paul was looking down rows of tables set with silver and crystal, gleaming in the light — rows of people, and bright faces staring out at him. At the end of the room was a raised table, a focal point of flowers and candelabra, and faces. He saw his wife there, and Creighton Jones and Mr. Jim and their wives. Beyond them he saw a banner: WATSON THE WIZARD.

"Forward, march!" Anderson commanded. Paul felt himself tugged onward, and then he was walking between the rows of tables and faces in the brilliant light, like a fighter entering an arena, and Anderson and Reagan were lifting his arms and waving, and the whole room was singing: *"For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow. . . ."*

"BACK in the good old days when I myself was a head coach . . ." Mr. Jim said. He spoke slowly and distinctly, his cherubic face beaming at the satisfied audience. The dinner was finished now, the lights had been dimmed. Wreaths of smoke were rising and coiling lazily over the room. ". . . a fellow once told me that I could talk the best game and field the poorest team of any coach in Texas." Laughter rippled across the listening faces. "It took me forty years to find a place for myself in football. I have it now, a perfect situation. Paul figures out how to win the game, Creighton helps him do it. And after the game is won, I talk about it."

Paul looked at Mr. Jim's fingers touching the table at his side. This was better than gazing down at the audience. From the mo-

ment of entry he had cringed before those rapt, admiring faces. He had been prepared for anything except tribute, and now he was too stunned to feel honored, too humbled and embarrassed to accept the plaudits graciously.

Two hours ago he had hated these people. In varying degrees he had hated them from the day he came to Coulton. These were the wolves, the curbstone quarterbacks. They plagued him with questions, they whispered that Bobby's injury was no accident. They made his job hazardous and his life miserable with an endless variety of griefs, suggestions and pronouncements. Yet at the very moment he was typing a letter of resignation, they were preparing this testimonial dinner in his honor.

Even Mitch Mitchell was there, Paul noticed. His face, as ever, was impassive. He seemed friendly, but still he had an aloof air, as if he were withholding his own shattering testament.

With Mitchell present, the whole evening became a mockery.

"What can I say?" Mr. Jim made an outward gesture with his upturned hands. "I could talk all night. But Paul has already spoken as only a good coach can speak -- through his team. You've seen that team. You've seen it go on winning week after week when you knew, I knew, the team knew it had no right to win. Four months ago when I first met Paul, I watched him at practice that afternoon and I said to myself, 'He's my boy.' He nearly killed us that first afternoon. Eight boys quit the team before we'd played a game. Paul was a slave driver. But when the games began to count, we had a football team.

"Yesterday Paul asked that team for what amounted to a vote of confidence. You heard about it. The vote was unanimous. There isn't a boy on our team who wouldn't wade waist deep in hell for Paul Watson. They know he demands the limit from them day after day. But they also know he's fair, that he has what it takes to make them into a winning team.

"Paul —" he placed a hand on Paul's shoulder "— before we adjourn, I'll say just this. I gave you my vote of confidence four months ago. The players gave you theirs yesterday. Tonight the whole town is giving it. Win or lose on Saturday, it makes no difference in our feelings for you. Paul, you're our boy."

MORRIS ANDERSON and his wife brought them home and helped them carry the gifts inside. In their outburst of gratitude, the townspeople had given a little of everything — lamps, gadgets, dishes, linens, even baby clothes. After the Andersons were gone, Grace sat on the bed. "I feel like a bride again," she said.

"I feel like a jackass," Paul replied.

Grace began to laugh. "Darling, if you could have seen your face when they opened those doors. You looked like a small boy at a circus." Tears filled her eyes suddenly, and she bit her lip. "Coulton has been very good to us, Paul. Better to us than we deserve. We haven't liked it here. We haven't tried to be friends or to take part in things. It occurred to me tonight that there's something very special about Coulton —"

He cut her short. "Coulton is no different from any other town. It likes to win football games. When it does, it likes the coach. When it doesn't —" He dragged a finger across his throat. "Don't ever go soft on a town, Grace — not while you're married to a football coach."

"But it might be different here in Coulton. We might —"

She got no further. The phone rang. Knowing what to expect, he shut the door behind him as he entered the hall. It was Mitchell.

"You told me not to call you again, Coach, but I'm a stubborn man." His voice was boyishly cheerful. "At the risk of a broken neck I wanted to tell you that I'm on your side. You seem to think I'm on Bolin's side — whatever that involves." He paused, then asked, "Are you listening to me?"

"I'm listening," Paul said. "Go on."

"Well, when you mentioned Bolin's name Tuesday morning, I knew something was screwy — that you wouldn't be acquainted with Bolin otherwise. If Bolin's trying to fix you up with something, I wish you'd have a talk with me. I happen to know Hunkie Bolin. I know the kind of man he is and how he operates."

"All right," Paul said, "I'll meet you at the field in ten minutes."

THE FIELD was lonely in the moonlight. His steps on the graveled drive seemed to spread out in waves of sound, echoing in the empty stands and booths.

Mitch was seated in the grandstand. Paul saw him plainly in the moonlight and he mounted the steps and sat down beside him.

"I've always kept my nose out of other people's business," Mitch began carefully.

Paul cleared his throat. "I made a bad mistake, Mitchell. I could have sworn you were working for Bolin."

"Well, I'm not. Are you?"

"No."

"But Bolin's trying to get you to. Is that it?"

"That's the general idea," Paul said.

Mitch lit a cigarette and said, "I could tell from the way you acted Tuesday morning that Hunkie Bolin had put a hook in you somehow. But I still can't understand how he did it. Bolin's not fool enough to try bribing you."

"No. It's no bribe," Paul said. It was cold sitting in the empty stands. He rubbed his hands together and blew his breath on them. "I guess you'd call it blackmail."

"I see," Mitch said evenly. "What's he got on you?"

Paul drew up his shoulders and blew on his hands again. "If I thought there was anything you could do, I'd gladly tell you."

"Sure, I know what you're thinking," Mitch said forcefully. "Who's this character pumping me? A score-card peddler, a crap-shooter. I remind you of Hunkie Bolin, don't I?"

"I didn't say that."

"But I don't remind you of anybody, let's say, like Morris Anderson or Bob Reagan." For the first time, Mitch's voice had a ring of defiance. "You never think of me as the father of one of your players — just as the town gambler. I'd sell out my own son, wouldn't I? That's what you've been thinking all week."

"I was wrong. I'm sorry about that."

"Keep your apologies. Now what's the deal between you and Bolin?"

"He's got a picture of me and a girl taken at night outside his motel."

Mitch whistled softly.

"I haven't any excuses, Mitchell. You'd think I was lying if I told you I didn't take the girl into the motel. I didn't, but who

would believe me against the evidence? I made a foolish mistake and I'm going to pay for it." Paul looked at Mitch squarely for the first time. "Talk about your fools. How do you think I felt at that dinner tonight, listening to what they had to say about me and thinking about Bolin and that picture? You know Bolin. What sort of a man is he?"

"Bolin? He used to be mixed up in the fight game. He's a fixer, not a gambler. This little deal he's trying to work with you is a typical Bolin enterprise. What's his proposition to you?"

Paul told him, and Mitch was thoughtful for a moment. "You going to do it for him?"

"No!" Paul snapped.

"Bolin will ruin you."

"I ruined myself when I stopped at the motel. However, I've got Bolin thinking I will. There's a bare chance we may win the game, and if we do I can at least get out of the coaching business with a clean record."

Mitch tilted his watch in the moonlight. "It's ten thirty," he said. "Care to drive into San Antonio with me?"

Paul glanced at him, and Mitch shrugged. "Just an idea," he said. "Bolin hates my guts. Last year he came out to my place—he and a couple of big city operators with nothing better to do that night. The trip cost them three thousand dollars. Bolin is a hard loser. He's got nothing against you. But, like I say, he hates my guts." They were already walking toward the entrance gate.

Mitch was a wild, uncaring driver. They came out of the Y into the San Antonio highway like a shot out of a cannon. Soon Paul was braking against the floor and holding his breath on the curves. He looked at the speedometer and saw the finger touching ninety.

"Just forgetting there's a guy named Bolin," Mitch said calmly, "what sort of chance have we got Saturday?"

Paul watched the road shoulder hurtling past his window. "We've got about as much chance as the celebrated snowball," he said.

"No chance at all," Mitch said, nodding. "That's what I think, and I think it's a dirty shame too. We've got a fine little team this year. I hate to see the kids lose out now that they've come this far.

Personally, I didn't give a hang for football, except from a business standpoint, until Robin started playing. Then I took a good look and found I knew nearly every player on the team — kids I'd seen grow up with Robin. It made a difference. I went out to watch, and pretty soon I started cheering."

"It's a good team," Paul admitted. "Not a great team — not like Bryan. But it's one I'll never forget. I never saw one that tried harder, or one that could make so many mistakes and still go on winning."

"What's the answer? Guts?"

"Not entirely. Just plain innocence, I think. It's never occurred to them that they can be beaten."

They were silent then. Paul watched a town approaching and he saw the sign *Minderville* as it whipped past.

"I've lived in Coulton all my life," Mitch said. "It's a funny thing. I've never cared for the place, and yet I've never seriously thought about living anywhere else. Even after the old man died and Mama and the rest of the kids moved to Dallas, I stayed in Coulton. I was seventeen then —" he laughed pleasantly, as if recalling some sort of joke he'd played on himself "— and madly in love. Falling in love at seventeen is hardly worth mentioning, but I overdid it. I got married. That was 1934. For the next seven years I was the happiest married man you ever saw. Robin was born in 1938. Until 1942 I was a shirt clerk at Hamilton's and I'd never held a pack of cards in my hand. After I was drafted I had six weeks' basic training and then a slow boat to the South Pacific. Did you ship across during the war?"

"I flew over."

"You missed it. On a troop ship there's usually one or more running crap games. Guys drop out and new ones come in, but the game never stops. I got into one of those games just by accident. They had to explain it all to me but there was some talk about me bringing luck to the game, and the next thing I knew I was down on my knees. With time off for chow and sleep, I shot craps for the next five days. One time, I remember, I made nine straight passes. I got me a reputation on that boat, Paul. When we made port, I sent home twenty-two money orders for one hundred dollars each."

Mitch put another cigarette between his lips. "You know what my wife did with that money?" he asked. "She took it and lit out for California, and I haven't seen her to this day. I divorced her in 1947. When I got back to Coulton after the war, I went out to Hawthorne Street to see the house where we'd lived for seven years. It was small and shabby — I couldn't convince myself I'd ever lived there. I knew then that I wasn't one of those veterans who wanted his old job back. I went to Dallas to get Robin, and we've lived in Coulton ever since. You know those posters used to say, 'Join the Army and learn a trade.' That's what I did. I ran a dice game downtown for a couple of years until the ladies' clubs started complaining. By that time I was loaded. I bought an acreage out on Cottonwood Creek with a nice ranch house, just right for entertaining guests."

Mitch lapsed into silence again, dragging on his cigarette. "Learn a trade, they say," he resumed without bitterness, "and yet when I learned mine the whole town forgot everything it knew about me. I was suddenly the poor man's Al Capone. Even my best friends think I carry a gun, have hoods working for me, and that I'm tied in with a gambling syndicate. I'm strictly a small-town businessman, I tell them, but they won't believe it. Men gamble on anything. If they gamble on stocks and royalties, they're upstanding, honest men. If they gamble on a turn of the card, they're crooks. A man can make a killing on the market and every penny of it comes out of somebody else's pocket, but a gambler never gets rich by cleaning a poor man. I run the dice game for the boys who can afford it.

"Except for the reputation it gives you, gambling is no worse than any other business, if it's run right. But you don't dare step out of line. You contribute twice as much to churches and charities as the respectable citizens, but your name never appears on the list of contributors. Nobody gives you any testimonial dinners. I don't care about myself, but I hate it for Robin's sake. It didn't make any difference until a couple of years ago. But now I sometimes see him through different eyes. Robin ought to have a mother and a decent home." Mitch rolled down the window to get rid of his cigarette. "What would you think if I told you I'm about to get married again?"

"Well, I —" Paul sought for something to say.

"Nobody in Coulton knows about it yet. We've been seeing each other on the sly because she's afraid she might lose her job. Of all the women in the world, I had to fall for a schoolteacher."

Paul sank back on the seat and closed his eyes. Mitch Mitchell and Helen Jenkins. He had been wrong about everything from the beginning. Seeing them drive out of the lane Tuesday night, he had judged them only in terms of his own predicament, never thinking that they might have another reason for being there.

And then something else struck Paul: suppose they managed to get the pictures from Bolin. Mitch was sure to find out that the woman involved was Helen. His own words mocked him ironically: *You'd think I was lying if I told you I didn't take the girl into the motel.*

THE ATTENDANT, the one called Hammerhead, was in the office but otherwise it was empty. Bolin, it seemed, was downtown but he could probably be reached by phone.

"Tell him there's a man from Coulton here to see him," Mitch said.

The attendant went dutifully to the switchboard, plugged the outside line and began dialing. He talked briefly in a low voice, then raised his head above the counter. "He say who is it?"

Mitch cocked an eye. "He knows who I am."

The attendant relayed this information, listened, and Paul heard him say, "Naw, sir, two of them." He pulled out the plug. "He say he be here in half an hour," he told Mitch.

Half an hour! Paul wondered if he could endure a half hour more of this suspense. Somewhere during the ride from Coulton he and Mitch should have discussed the matter and got their signals straight. They shouldn't have come here on a whim, naked and unprepared. Mitch's casualness was maddening. Paul crossed to the sofa, took a magazine and sat down.

The minutes dragged — twenty, now thirty — and suddenly a car plunged into the drive and skidded to a stop. A moment later Bolin was standing in the doorway. His eyes swept past Paul, coming to rest on Mitch. Recognizing him, he relaxed and his face squeezed into a disdainful smile. "Well, well," he said, "if it ain't

the king of the galloping dominoes." He seated himself on the counter stool and barked, "Take a break, Hammerhead."

As the attendant went out Mitch seemed to take notice of Bolin for the first time. He got up and walked to the counter. "How much you betting Saturday?" he said. "Five thousand? Ten?"

Bolin took his time answering. "Did you come all the way over here just to ask me that? I could have told you by telephone that it ain't none of your business."

"Let's call it ten," Mitch said. "Have you placed it yet?"

Bolin's breath quickened. "Mitchell, if there's anything I don't like," he said, "it's some punk butting into my business."

Mitch snubbed out his cigarette in an ash tray on the counter. "I'd say you haven't bet anything yet. You won't until tomorrow night, until the odds settle. So here's something you might consider. A bet's a bet even when you've got everything fixed. You might win. On the other hand you might get double-crossed. If you want to be *sure* that picture pays off, you'd better take what you can get for it — now — tonight."

Bolin shifted his eyes to Paul. He regarded him with a cold stare. "You've taken up with bad company, Watson." His voice was gently admonishing. "You ain't going to do no double-crossing."

Mitch grinned at Paul. His boyish face was as mild as Bolin's face was menacing. "Tell him, Paul," he said.

Paul returned Bolin's stare. "You can go straight to hell, Bolin."

Bolin looked as if he had been slapped. He leaped to his feet. "I'll ruin you!" he roared. "I'll run you out of this state!" He glanced at Mitch, first in dismay, then in a gathering wake of resentment. "Mitchell, get out of here! Watson and I had a deal set until you butted in."

"Not yet," Mitch said. "That picture's not going to be worth a dime to you Saturday. I'd like to see if it's worth anything now." Opening his overcoat as he talked, he reached a hand inside, and brought out a roll of bills as large as a baseball. He handled it with the deft indifference of a bank clerk. Bolin sat down.

Paul doubted he was seeing it. Mitch had a fantastic amount of money there. He could only guess — five, ten, fifteen thousand.

"Better start counting," Mitch told Bolin. He began tossing



bills on the counter, one at a time, like a dealer in a card game. Paul came forward to watch, unable to resist it, and saw that the bills were all hundreds. He tried to estimate the stack and pick up the count, but he was too late. They must be well past a thousand now — nearly at two — but he couldn't be sure. He glanced at Bolin's face; it was impassive.

It seemed minutes before Mitch stopped. He was looking at Bolin, gauging him. Bolin lifted bored, indifferent eyes. "I'm still counting," he said.

Mitch peeled more bills off the stack, each a little slower. He paused, pulled another, hesitating before letting it drop. He looked perplexed. Suddenly he said, "Hey, Bolin, maybe that picture's not worth anything after all," and reached for the money.

Bolin's hand shot out and landed on the money, and he grinned. "That's as high as I can count."

"The picture," Mitch said. "Let's have it."

Bolin sighed and stood

up. Behind him, imbedded in the wall, was a small safe. He unlocked it and brought a manila envelope to the counter. He handed it to Mitch and said, "It's all there. The negative and the prints."

Paul gazed eagerly, desperately at the envelope. His eyes never left it as Mitch picked it up and unfastened the clasp. Mitch reached inside, feeling of the contents, and Paul tensed himself for the instant when he would bring out the pictures. He glanced at Mitch and saw that he wasn't looking at the envelope at all but rather at Bolin. Then he realized in a surge of relief that Mitch didn't want to see the pictures, would never look at them.

Mitch handed him the envelope. "Check it," he said. "Tell me if you think it's all right."

Paul took the envelope aside and thumbed the pictures quickly. "All right," he said.

"Okay, Bolin," Mitch said, "a deal's a deal. I hope you don't try to cross me."

"Cross you?" Bolin's eyes were hard. "I don't even know you. Get out of here."

Mitch said nothing until they were bottled in the thick downtown traffic. Then he exhaled sharply. "I figured he'd go for a play like that. Bolin's just not a gambler. He's too scared he'll lose. You could tell that by watching his face. Stud poker was invented for guys like that."

Paul's mind was still in turmoil. The vision lingered of Mitch tossing hundred-dollar bills on the counter. It was hard to believe, even with the envelope securely in hand, that Bolin was no longer a threat to him. He looked at Mitch, wondering how, if ever, he could thank him. "How much did it cost you?" he asked.

Mitch lifted his shoulders. "What difference does it make? We got what we wanted."

"What difference does it make?" Paul was aghast. "It makes a big difference to me. I'm going to pay you back, of course."

Mitch grinned indulgently. "On your salary? With a baby due any day?" He flipped the matter aside with a wave of his hand. "I feel so noble right now. Let me enjoy it."

"And I feel like a beggar taking a handout. You'll get your

money back whether you want it or not. I made a mistake in intent if not in fact and I'm going to pay for it."

"Listen," Mitch said. "If you'd think a minute, you'd see my side of it. There's Bobby Reagan's dad. He crams a bond issue down the voters' throats and gets a new gymnasium for Coulton. He's a big wheel. All the boys say look what Bobby's dad did for us. And there's Morris Anderson. He's president of the Quarterback Club. Big wheel. Big team man. Every man in town does what he can to help the team along. See what I mean?"

"But Mitch," Paul protested, "five thousand — ten thousand dollars —"

"Forget it," Mitch said. "It isn't like I had to work for it."

"I'll never forget it," Paul said fervently. "It'll have to be in installments, but I'll pay back every cent."

They stopped for coffee on the far side of town. As Paul got out of the car, Mitch saw that he still had the envelope in his hand. "Saving that for your scrapbook?" he asked.

Paul grinned. "You won't believe me, but I'd forgotten about it."

Mitch flicked his cigarette lighter, and Paul held a corner of the envelope above the wavering light. They stood watching until the envelope had burned to ashes at their feet.

CHAPTER 7

BOBBY REAGAN returned to the team on Friday. That morning he came by Paul's office before classes to show him how well the knee had recovered. He jogged, did knee bends, went through the motions of punting. Finally he balanced himself on one foot, lowered his weight on the injured knee and pushed himself erect again. "You see," he said happily, "good as new."

Paul told him to report for practice that afternoon. Later he called Doc Morgan about it. "I didn't tell him he could play," Morgan said. "I merely told him the knee had responded sufficiently to stop treatments. I certainly didn't tell him to put on a football suit and see how much punishment it would take. I'm not going to assume responsibility in the matter. But if Bobby were my son, I wouldn't let him play."

That afternoon R. V. Reagan showed up at the football field. Several hundred people had gathered by the time the team emerged from the dressing room. They had heard the report and wanted it confirmed, and when they saw Bobby trotting on field with the rest of the squad they whistled, clapped their hands, and began milling and talking excitedly.

After calisthenics Paul took Bobby aside and worked with him for some time, bringing him through the various quarterback functions. The knee behaved perfectly. The boy was as loose and agile as ever. Paul sent him to join the squad and walked over to the sideline, where Reagan was lighting a fresh cigar. "Well, Coach, what do you think?" Reagan asked.

"He seems okay to me," Paul said. "I'm no doctor. He's your son, Mr. Reagan. What do you think?"

"Well, Doc Morgan seems to think it's all right." Reagan's voice had a conciliatory tone. "Of course we don't want to take any risks with the boy, but the way I see it, Doc knows his business. He wouldn't okay it if he wasn't absolutely sure." He was beginning to rally his evidence, waving his cigar as he talked. "Tell you something else, Paul. A lot of people are going to be disappointed if Bobby misses that game. They never will forgive you if you hold him out on the slim chance he might get hurt again."

Paul looked at him in surprise. "I'm not holding him out," he protested. "You're his father. It's strictly up to you."

Reagan shook his head. "No, Paul, it's not my decision. Morgan's the doctor. You're the coach. Morgan said yesterday that the knee was well. You see Bobby out there. Can you or all these people see anything wrong with him? No. Then what are you going to tell them if you don't let Bobby play?"

AFTER an hour on the field and another hour around the dressing-room blackboard, Paul dismissed the players.

It was only five and Grace was not there with the car, but he didn't mind. He felt like walking. The air was crisp and clear — a fine day, good football weather. Before he knew it he was whistling.

This wouldn't do, of course. On the day before a game he was supposed to be wretched and subdued. Optimism was a fatal disease

in his profession. But the feeling was there and he couldn't shake it. Since last night, when Hunkie Bolin ceased to be a menace — since two hours ago, when he realized he was going to start Bobby at quarterback — the week had lost all portents of doom.

A block from his house a passing car with two men in it braked abruptly and stopped at the curb.

"Paul Watson?" The driver wasn't quite sure.

"That's me," Paul said.

The second man got out. He was big and muscular and, though he had a weathered face and a bleached mane of white hair, his handshake was firm. "Haverland," he said. "Doyle Haverland."

Doyle Haverland. Paul had known the name as long as he had known the meaning of football. Doyle Haverland had won three state championships before Paul had seen a game. When he was head coach at Barrington College, his teams had been the first in the Southwest to gain national recognition. Now, as Barrington's director of athletics, he was a living legend.

"Get out, Buck," Haverland shouted to the driver. "We've caught him. Let's throw him in the trunk and make a break for it." He laughed, still shaking Paul's hand, and when the other man joined them he said, "Paul, this is Wilson Buckner, chairman of the athletic committee up at Barrington."

Buckner shook hands. "I've been hearing a lot about you, Watson," he said.

"I hope you listened to the right people," Paul said.

"The school superintendent — a Mr. Anderson — a fellow named Bob Reagan." Buckner smiled. "They all think you're some boy."

Doyle Haverland's eyes searched the street. "Where's your house, Paul? I hate to talk business in broad daylight."

They got in the car and drove the final block. At the house the men were cordial and apologetic in accepting Grace's invitation to coffee. Settled in the living room, Haverland leaned forward and placed his cup on the table. "You know why we're here, of course, Paul. We're looking for a new head coach at Barrington. We have to take applications and hold interviews, but if you want the job, I think it's yours. It's a big break for you if it works out. You'll be one of the youngest head coaches in the business. It's

not an easy job, but if we didn't think you were the man for it we wouldn't be here."

Buckner sat forward and said with marked intensity, "We're dead serious about this coaching change, Watson. Modern-day college football is a big, expensive operation. At Barrington, unfortunately, we've been operating with an athletic setup that's thirty years outdated, yet we've been trying to play a big-time schedule. Either we have to rebuild from the bottom up — new coaching staff, new recruiting program, new inducements for the players — or else we have to drop down to the minor-college level as far as football is concerned. We haven't the money to hire a top-bracket coach, so we're searching the high-school ranks. The man we do hire can expect to grow with us. It's only fair to tell you, I think, that we've sifted through a lot of records in the past month. You'd be surprised how many good high-school coaches are looking for better jobs."

"John Golden, for example," Paul said.

The two men exchanged glances, and Haverland said, "Golden's a fine fellow — an excellent coach. It's no secret that we've had an eye on him for some time. But —" He shrugged, then added, "It's not fair, either to us or to Golden, to say that this trouble at Big Canyon ruined him as far as Barrington is concerned. It didn't. We know the truth about Big Canyon, and we think just as highly of Golden as we always did. If he were the best coach available, we'd still hire him."

"The plain truth is that we couldn't make up our minds between you and Golden until yesterday," Buckner put in. "Naturally, all other things being equal, we prefer a coach with a clean record off the field as well as on it. Golden, we know, is clean, but the mark of dissatisfaction is on him now and we can't erase it. I'm sorry for him. He's had a rough shake at Big Canyon, but then I'm not chairman of a sympathy committee."

WATCHING them drive away, Paul felt Grace's arm encircling his waist. "Oh, Paul, Paul," she said softly, "it's not true. I'm not going to believe a word of it."

For several seconds he held her in his arms, stroking her hair,

letting his mind grow familiar with this vast new turn of fortune. Only twenty-four hours ago he had left home with a letter of resignation in his pocket. Since then the whole world had changed.

"You've come a long way, Paul," Grace said. "It doesn't seem possible that you started coaching only six years ago. Remember Moultree, where you coached that first year, and the house we lived in there? No plumbing." She pushed free of him and turned on the light. "Then Ainsworth and a house with plumbing and a district championship. What was wrong with Ainsworth?"

He grinned. "Too small. Had to keep moving, getting ahead."

She sighed and shook her head. "Then Bradbury. And I was just getting to like it there when we came to Coulton. In a way it's been a long six years, hasn't it — living in rented houses, always knowing we'd move on again? But you said if we kept winning and moving, getting better and better jobs, we'd finally come to what we wanted. And we have, Paul, much sooner than we expected."

"Yes, much sooner." He dug his hands in his pockets, wondering why he should suddenly be glum. He was beginning to feel guilt-stricken and dejected. He hadn't even applied for the Barrington job, and yet the feeling was strong that he was conspiring, betraying a trust in a selfish effort to secure it.

"The trouble with me — with all coaches," he said, "is that we're a band of hired assassins. We make big talk about team spirit and winning for the school. But what team? What school? Whichever happens to be hiring us this season. And the truth is, we don't give a darn for the school, the players, the game. All we want to do is win at any price and then move on to bigger and better seasons."

Grace smiled. "It's Friday, darling," she reminded him. "It's the end of the world."

He shook his head. "You're wrong this time. I'm not worried about the game now, because to me the game isn't important any more. We've already got what we wanted out of Coulton. If we lose tomorrow, it won't keep us from moving on to Barrington. End of the world?" He laughed curtly. "Just the end of my self-respect. It's been a big week, honey. When I began it on Monday, I had some silly ideals about loyalty — about doing what was best

for the boys and the school. I know now that everything I've done for the past six years has been strictly for Paul Watson."

Grace looked at him in mild dismay. "I don't blame you for feeling upset," she said. "You're thinking about John Golden. So am I."

"Golden?" he snapped. "Why should I think of him? That's it exactly. I never think of anyone except myself."

WHEN Paul arrived at Alamo Stadium at a quarter of one on Saturday, the vast area — stands, booths, ramps, the field itself — had a hushed aura of expectancy. Far away in the wide, shallow valley the skyline of San Antonio was framed in winter haze.

He parked and stood waiting for the bus to arrive. Then the players, lugging their trussed-up gear, filed after him quickly into the dressing room. Timing was extremely important today. Thirty minutes to dress, thirty minutes to warm up, ten minutes for the pre-game ceremonies. No time to dawdle, no time to think. They were small boys from a small town, accustomed to small and friendly fields, and they had to arrive at kickoff in exactly the right frame of mind. Twenty thousand people could frighten the bravest among them.

The players dressed quietly. If they were worried, they had yet to show it. Their talk was perfunctory and businesslike, their faces were calm. "You've got ten minutes to finish dressing!" Paul bellowed. "Snap it up!"

The dressing-room door was always kept locked before a game. The manager had orders to guard it and turn away everyone except officials. But at one fifteen a knock sounded and the manager, after sticking his head out, called back to Paul, "Fellow wants to see you, Coach."

Paul found John Golden standing outside, hands in pockets, looking self-reproachful for intruding. "I know how it is before a game," he said apologetically, "but an old fire horse like me — I just had to look in for a minute and wish you luck."

Paul pushed the door open. "Come on inside," he said. "Don't wish me luck. Wish it to the players. They need all the luck in the world today. Say something to them." He rapped on a locker door

for attention and called out, "Here's John Golden. Listen to him."

The players obediently fell silent. Golden stepped onto a bench and gazed across their lifted, expectant faces. "No speech, boys," he said. "I've been up in the stands with a bunch of visiting firemen, listening to them talk about weights and averages and comparative scores and all that bunk. They insist it's Bryan's game because Byran has the better record. I don't believe that. I've seen you boys ruin too many records this season." He winced elaborately, saying, "Mine, for one," and the players laughed. "I came here this afternoon to watch you win another ball game," he told them. "There isn't a doubt in my mind but what you will."

Paul had kept a careful eye on the players. When Golden stepped down, they were grinning at one another and looking pleased and confident. Golden moved among them, calling a few by name and shaking their hands. He lingered a moment to talk with Mr. Jim and Creighton before coming back to the door.

"Why don't you ride the bench with us this afternoon?" Paul invited. "We'd be glad to have you."

"No, sir," Golden said emphatically. "I get too worked up down there on the field. I'm going to sit in the stands and relax and enjoy this one."

"Is the wife with you?"

"No, she's home — packing." Golden's face grew overcast. He looked weary and more than a little disheartened. "She wants to get out of that town as soon as possible, and I can't blame her. But, like I told her, we have to find someplace to go first."

"Do you have anything in mind yet?"

Golden flexed his shoulders. "I still have hopes of landing that Barrington job."

It was difficult for Paul to hide his surprise. "Haven't they told you anything definite?" he asked.

"Not yet," Golden said. "I'm going up to Barrington next week and have a talk with Doyle Haverland."

Above them in the stands the Coulton band cut loose, drawing a sustained roar from the fans. Golden waited for the din to subside, then said, "Well, good luck, Paul." He put out his hand.

"Same to you," Paul replied. "Best of luck."

He stood at the door, watching, as Golden joined the crowd. He thought of how thin the line was drawn between success and failure. He could be as easily in disgrace today, with Golden still at the pinnacle of his career. . . .

The music had stopped. "All right, let's move," he shouted, and the players clattered to their feet. He stood at the door, slapping them on the back as they went past him single-file. A long cheer swelled overhead, followed by a new burst of music from the Coulton band. A moment later the Bryan team appeared and the west stands leaped to violent life. For half a minute the stadium shook with conflicting waves of sound.

For the next twenty minutes Paul had nothing at all to do. This, probably, was the most agonizing period of a coach's life, the warm-up before a game, when he stood by helplessly and remembered all the things which hadn't been done at practice. He drifted toward the Bryan end of the field.

He had never met the Bryan coach, Travis McCall, and after a moment he spotted him standing at the sideline — a tall, hawk-like man nervously smoking a cigarette. McCall came forward grinning, hand extended.

"Watson, you fiend," he said, "I don't like that look on your face. You've got something cooked up, I can tell. I want you to lay off that spread stuff today."

Paul shook hands with him. "Boy Scout honor, Mac, I haven't a trick to my name. All I have is a bunch of little lambs waiting to be slaughtered. You're the one who has the football team."

"And you," McCall said, "have the reputation. I'll swap with you."

"I've come here hat in hand," Paul assured him, "to ask you to be a gentleman. After you've run up a four-touchdown lead, send in your subs and let us score one."

Thus they talked pleasantly for several minutes. It made Paul feel better, standing among the Bryan players and seeing that they were like high-school players everywhere — husky, clean-cheeked youths, tense and anxious and unsure.

At a quarter of two Paul wished his rival luck and went back to the Coulton squad. The crowd had grown tensely quiet. Even the

sight of the referee and captains meeting at mid-field was sufficient to command its whole attention. The inevitable "testing, one, two, three" began on the field speakers. Paul looked at his watch. Ten minutes. The broadcast would be starting now. He smiled as he thought of Woffie up in the radio booth, bending over the player board with painstaking intensity. There were games and games, but Woffie would remember this one for the rest of his life.

Checking over the players, Paul noticed that Donnie was staring mutely, blankly at the crowd. He had the look of a trapped animal searching for a way to escape. His face was slack and glassy-eyed and riven with fear. "Hold out your hands," Paul commanded.

Donnie extended his hands, palms upward. His fingers were trembling violently. "I can't help it, Coach," he said wretchedly. "I did like you said. I kept moving. I tried not to look at the stands."

"Okay," Paul said. He set his elbows tight against his sides, braced himself and thrust out his palms. "Hit me."

Donnie began smacking his fists against Paul's palms. "Harder," Paul said. "You're scared to hit me."

Ernie Gillis saw them and came on the run, grinning eagerly. "Want me to rough him up a little, Coach?" he asked.

"Yes," Paul said. "Knock some sense into him."

Ernie threw a vicious block that sent Donnie sprawling. Donnie leaped to his feet, aroused, and he and Ernie lunged at each other.

"Keep him busy, Ernie," Paul said. "If he starts gawking, knock him on his tail again."

Bobby was trotting back from mid-field and Paul went to meet him. "Good luck, Coach," he said. "We get the ball."

"That's a break," Paul said. He dropped an arm around Bobby's shoulder. "Now remember, it's going to be a long game. Take your time. Don't let Donnie handle the ball at first. He's going to be nervous. You might try the spread early because I think they're worried about it. One final thing —" he shook the boy's shoulders "— hear me now. I don't want you running with the ball at first."

"But, Coach — the knee's all right, I tell you."

"You heard me, Bobby."

The Bryan starters were already on field, and Paul signaled his starters together. They huddled around him, placing their hands

on top of his on the ground. Then they broke with a shout, and he went to join the rest of the team on the bench.

The air was charged with tension now. Drums were rolling. He watched the Bryan captain lift his arm, saw Bobby respond, heard the referee's whistle shrill above the crowd's roar. The kicker came forward and the ball was booted high, riding the breeze. Paul followed its flight and saw Ernie waiting on the goal line. He took it without haste and came forward at a trot, hunting an opening. He found it, shot down the middle while players clashed and tumbled in front of him. A wave of Bryan tacklers dragged him down at the thirty-yard line.

On the next three plays Coulton picked up thirteen yards. Creighton came down to Paul's end of the bench with triumph in his eyes. "That's twice they've suckered that guard," he exulted. "Bobby's already found their weakness."

"They won't sucker him again," Paul said firmly.

Nevertheless, he was pleased. They had to move the ball, and they were showing that they could do it.

He held his breath on the next play. Bobby, disobeying orders, came wide to the left with receivers fanning out down field. He cocked his arm and pumped twice before deciding to run. He reached the Bryan forty-five before being bottled and rolled out of bounds. For a fearful instant Paul was sure he'd been injured, but Bobby got up and trotted back to the huddle. He wasn't limping.

Bryan called time out, and subs rushed in to shore up the defenses.* Paul relaxed, listening to the frantic Coulton fans chanting, "Goal, goal!" When play resumed Coulton earned a meager yard in two downs. On third down Bobby went to the right, tried to pass, couldn't, tried to run, and was blasted out of bounds by the Bryan linemen, who were beginning to break through in force. This time Bobby got up slowly, but still he wasn't limping. Paul was satisfied now that the knee could take punishment.

Standing at mid-field, Bobby angled a good kick out of bounds at the eleven-yard line and James Long went in to play safety. Bobby trotted toward the bench, shucking off his helmet as he

*Rules of the Texas Interscholastic League differ from those governing college football in that they allow unlimited substitutions.

came. "Coach," he said, "that's the — the biggest, toughest line — we've ever been up against." He passed a sleeve across his face and reached for a bottle of water. He rinsed his mouth and spat. "We're not going to move that line. But I can work five-seventies and five-eighties all day if you'll let me. They're suckers for option plays."

Paul hesitated. "Bobby, it's your knee," he said. "If you think you can do it, go ahead. But if you feel anything in that knee, then you've got to lay off the running."

Bryan had gained a first down on the twenty-five. Paul watched the action with momentary concern, but the Coulton line stiffened and held. Bryan's kick was sliced to the left, but James Long handled it cleanly and fought back to the Coulton forty-five. "All right, Bobby," Paul said, "start working your options. Don't be afraid to pass now." Bobby nodded and trotted on field.

Paul watched intently as the play came out — the spread. Bobby didn't rush it. He took the snap and faded to his right. Receivers sprayed out and instantly the whole field was in turmoil, with white Coulton jerseys and maroon Bryan defenders mingling and falling. Bobby cocked his arm to pass, checked, cocked again. Then suddenly he was away, running with a nimble ease that brought the crowd up screaming. Picking his holes, checking, threading, he was at the Bryan forty-yard line, the thirty-five, the thirty — a brilliantly sustained run that left a wake of strewn players all the way back to mid-field. At last he was mobbed and buried by the desperate defenders.

And when he got up, he was lame. Paul saw it — a slight off-balance gait, impossible to conceal. Then he knew that it had never been a question of whether the knee would hold but only of how long it would. One more blow like that . . .

Bryan had called for time again, and Mr. Jim came hurrying down to Paul. "Did you see what I saw?" he asked despairingly.

Paul nodded. "I saw something else too. I think Bobby missed it." He looked along the bench, finally calling, "Robin!"

Robin Mitchell grabbed his helmet and came running. The game's excitement had flushed his cheeks and set his eyes dancing: a small, hard-fibered boy who strongly resembled his father.

Paul walked with him to the sideline. "Go in for Donnie," he

said. "Tell Bobby to run a two-seven. Tell him we want the ball all the way over to the left marker. Then pull a five-eight-two. Tell him they're flank-shy. They're leaving the middle wide open on spread plays, shifting their whole defense to the outside."

Robin nodded and ran out on the field.

Paul came back to the bench and explained the situation briefly to Mr. Jim. Then they watched as the setup play unfolded. Coulton had to yield ground to get the ball into position. This didn't matter. The five-eight-two was what counted. In the agonizing seconds before it came Paul was riddled with doubts. It was a weird and dangerous play. Misfiring, it could be disastrous.

But it worked. Perfectly.

Bobby, swinging wide to the right with the ball, drew the whole defense with him. At the right sideline, never having glanced behind him, he leaped, pivoted, and rifled the ball across field to Robin, who was dancing with impatience at the vacant scrimmage line. The rest was a wild race for the goal stripe. Robin made it by the thinnest of margins, falling across the boundary flag in the clutches of the Bryan safety. The Coulton stands went berserk. The band blared; cowbells and cattlemen's yowls sounded above the roar.

Robin lay where he had fallen. Teammates rushed to him, hauled him to his feet, almost pounded him to death. It seemed unbelievable that such a small boy could have created such bedlam. He was still clinging to the football. The referee had to pry it away from him.

As the noise subsided Paul looked toward Donnie and nodded, and Donnie snapped on his helmet and raced back into the game. The waning cheers revived as Robin came off field. Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

"I did it, didn't I?" he gasped. "It was a touchdown, wasn't it?"

Paul tousled his hair. "All things considered, it was the darnedest touchdown I ever saw. You tell your dad I said that."

Robin grinned, swiped a sleeve across his nose. He looked up into the stands, searching hopefully through the sea of faces while subs closed around him and began slapping his back.

Play was resuming on field. Paul stood at the sideline and watched Bobby boot the ball squarely through the uprights for the extra

point. As the team came back up field, Paul noted again that Bobby was favoring his knee. He sent James Long to replace him, then motioned for Doc Morgan. Bobby stretched out on the ground at Morgan's orders, and the doctor knelt beside him and began feeling of the knee. The examination was brief. He looked up at Paul and said, "It's swelling. I was afraid of that. Keep it warm and loose and massage it. You might get a little more service out of it that way." He sounded like a machinist appraising a piece of equipment.

Paul went to the bench and sat down. He wasn't going to worry about Bobby, he decided — not yet. Maybe — he didn't believe it — maybe one touchdown would be enough.

Within minutes, however, he knew it wouldn't be. Goaded and aroused, the Bryan team went methodically to work. Short explosive bursts brought them to mid-field. Soon Paul realized that it would take three, perhaps four touchdowns to beat such a team. Slowly, yard by yard, the Coulton team gave ground. Only a fumbled pass, recovered by Coulton, kept the attackers from scoring before the first period ended.

Bobby stood up and began fastening his helmet. Paul rose quickly, ignoring the look on Doc Morgan's face. "Passes, Bobby," he said succinctly. "You've got to." He held him by the arm firmly to detain him. "If you run with the ball one time — you hear me — one time — I'll pull you out of the game."

It was a grave risk and he knew it, but there was no mistaking the Bryan team now. It was going to score touchdowns, and Coulton had to build a lead if possible while Bobby was still of service.

For a time the passes worked. Petey Gonzales caught three in a row — for seven, nine and twelve yards. The Coulton fans were already chanting "goal, goal" again when a Bryan halfback intercepted a pass at mid-field.

Watching the Bryan power at work once more, Paul told himself that it was really no contest at all, just as the experts had predicted. Bryan had poise, weight, depth, versatility — everything a great team must have. The Coulton line was mercilessly torn apart. In six plays Bryan had a touchdown.

With the score tied at 7-7 and with Bobby kneeling beside him for instructions, Paul was adamant. "Passes," he said.

"But, Coach —"

"Passes, Bobby. That's all we've got now."

He was wrong and he knew it. Passes wouldn't beat a team like Bryan because its players were smart enough to adjust to such an attack. Yet he knew that his knockout punch — Bobby's ability to run — was gone now. Only the threat of it remained.

Bobby mixed flat zone passes with Ernie Gillis's slams down the middle. Coulton moved all the way to the Bryan forty before having to punt. Then the pounding began once more. Bryan seemed committed not so much to scoring another touchdown as to beating all resistance out of the Coulton team. Paul ached from the ordeal of it, as if he himself had been on the scrimmage line. When Bryan's second touchdown finally came, five minutes before the half, Coulton had taken a fearful beating, though on the point try Ernie broke through and blocked the kick.

Paul called Bobby out and told the team manager to massage his leg. While the teams were lining up for the kickoff, Doc Morgan sat down beside Paul and said emphatically, "Bobby's through. He's limping now, and if he gets one more hard blow on that knee he's going to be limping the rest of his life." He waited a moment before asking, "Are you willing to take a chance on that, Paul?"

"No, of course not," Paul answered. He looked toward Bobby.

James Long had trotted to the sideline with the expectation of Bobby's return, but Paul waved him back into the game. Seeing this, Bobby glanced at him in dismay, and Paul shook his head slowly. Bobby drew his lips tight and went back to the bench.

With James Long at tailback, the team groped forward, gaining one first down before it had to punt. Then Bryan resumed the pounding. Paul kept his eyes on the clock as the battle moved slowly down field. Four minutes, now three, now two. Inside the Coulton thirty, with time running out, Bryan went to the air and the passes failed, and Coulton took the ball and punched weakly at the line until the gun sounded.

Following his players toward the dressing room, Paul could tell from the slump of their shoulders, from the heaviness of their feet, from his own desperate feeling of inadequacy — the Coulton Cowboys were beaten.

CHAPTER 8

R. V. REAGAN was standing at the dressing-room door, his face flushed, his attitude imperative. "What's the matter out there?" he demanded. "Why aren't you using Bobby?"

Paul glared at him, wondering how the man could be such a fool. "His knee's gone bad. Didn't you notice?"

Reagan exploded. "That's a lie! I saw him pull off that touch-down. When Bobby was in there, we were clicking!" He was shouting, waving his arms, firing words in wild, staccato bursts. "So you pull him out. I don't like the looks of that one little bit."

Paul folded his arms across his chest and waited. "So it's *I* now," he said calmly. "I don't like it. The truth finally comes out. All season you've been telling me what *they* like and what *they* won't stand for. But it's just *I, I, I*, isn't it? Well, let me tell you this, Mr. Reagan. Morgan examined your son's knee a few minutes ago and said that one more hard blow would cripple it for life." He drew in his breath sharply. "Do you still want me to play Bobby?"

Reagan was past anger. He was doubtful, then confused. When he spoke, his voice had a muted, pleading tone. "It's just a — just a bunch of nonsense. They're not always right, doctors aren't. They're always trying to scare you."

"Now it's *they* again," Paul chided. "Okay, Mr. Reagan, I'll play Bobby. I'll play him until they carry him off the field on a stretcher. But you're going to put it in writing. *I order you to play Bobby, signed R. V. Reagan.*"

Reagan's lips began trembling, and he was suddenly crushed and almost pitiable. Paul wondered why the man had ever distressed him when he was so obviously a fixer and a fraud.

Reagan avoided Paul's eyes. "I don't know what I'm saying. It's — it's something about the crowds, hearing the school song, seeing yourself being beaten. I can't help it. I always act this way." He turned and hurried toward the stands.

Entering the dressing room, Paul felt as if a weight of long duration had finally been lifted. He remembered concessions which he had made as a result of Reagan's hints and pleas. Playing the

main team long after the game was won: "Let the score run up a little, Paul. We need the reputation." Suspecting and distrusting Mitch Mitchell: "He's a cheap, crooked gambler." Hesitating, doubting the wisdom of using Donnie at quarterback: "They'll never stand for a Negro giving orders to the team, Paul — never."

All season he had raged at weakness. He had thrust the team forward by sheer drive and determination. Donnie quaked at the crowd's roar, knowing he was challenging deep-set prejudices, but he didn't quit. At one time or another, each player on the team had met a personal test under fire, and had responded with courage and devotion. It was he, Paul Watson, who had been weak.

Well, he had heard the last of R. V. Reagan. He had made his last concession to Monday quarterbacks. He was sick of winning, getting ahead, building a reputation. Mr. Jim had said once, "I never was a good coach because I'm not cruel enough. To me football has never been more than a game." He had paid the price for that shortcoming. At sixty he was a permanent assistant, underpaid and forgotten. But was that so bad? At least he enjoyed his work, and he wasn't plagued by the fixers and team followers who were wrecking the game.

Paul stood at the door a moment looking over the room. The fifteen players who had seen heavy action were stretched inert on the floor. Creighton, Mr. Jim, Doc Morgan and the team manager were scattered among them, talking quietly and administering to their needs. He would leave it this way, he decided. They didn't need fiery speeches. They just needed a quarterback. All week he had known who that quarterback should be, and yet (Reagan again!) he had played Donnie almost clandestinely at practice.

"They'll never stand for a Negro giving orders." And who were *they*? In the clearness of his mind now, *they* didn't exist, had never existed. *They* were no more than a fog of habits, fears and hates enshrouding stagnant minds.

"Donnie." The boy stood up stiffly and walked to the door. "Hold out your hands." Donnie obeyed, and his fingers were relaxed and steady.

"Bobby's out, you know," Paul said. "He won't be playing the last half. That makes you our quarterback."

The very thought of it jolted the boy, released a flood of fear. His eyes widened and his breath grew quick and forced.

"You'll do all right," Paul assured him, wishing that he could be sure of it himself. He put an arm around Donnie's shoulder and led him to a corner of the room, meanwhile motioning for Bobby.

"Donnie's going to be our quarterback this last half," he said. "I want you to tell him what you've found out about Bryan — where it's soft and what plays you think will work best against it. You're Donnie's coach now, you understand, and he's going to need all the help he can get."

Bobby grinned. "Sure, Coach," he said. "Donnie's the boy who can get the job done too. You wait and see."

Afterward Paul went among the players briefly, because a coach was supposed to do this at halftime — speaking wisely, rallying and inspiring them. But it was a sham. He had no advice to give. They had made no mistakes, missed no chances. It wasn't their fault that Bryan was a better team.

He watched Bobby and Donnie at the far end of the room. Bobby was talking animatedly, tracing patterns and making various motions with his hands, and Donnie was listening intently.

What would he have done, Paul wondered, if his superiors had come to him at halftime and said, "Here, Paul, Creighton is going to be our head coach this last half. We want you to give him all the help you can"?

Would he have smiled and said, "Sure — Creighton's the boy who can get the job done too"?

Or would he have walked out, slammed the door, and never come back again?

BRYAN took the last-half kickoff and resumed hammering. The drive carried quickly to mid-field, but there it sputtered and lost steam before dying finally at the Coulton thirty-five.

While Donnie was calling his first play, Mr. Jim, who was waiting anxiously beside Paul, said, "Well, what do you think?"

"I think maybe, Mr. Jim," Paul answered. "Maybe he can. If he doesn't get rattled."

They watched the play, a cutback over the left side. Donnie

handled the ball cleanly, but the Bryan line wasn't moved. He lost a yard. Back in the huddle, he took stock of the situation and called his second play without hesitation. From a distance he showed no signs of doubt or fear. He chanted his signals in a loud, clear voice audible even in the quiet stands.

This time Ernie went straight up the middle. The Coulton line, outcharged all afternoon, suddenly surged forward with Ernie riding the wave almost to mid-field. The next play was a trapper up the middle that cost Ernie a yard. "No, Donnie, no!" Paul said aloud. "Don't you see you can't trap them if they aren't charging?" He jumped to his feet and stood tensely waiting for the next play. Again it was Ernie burrowing into the line. No gain.

"Hollis!" Paul yelled. The sub tackle left the bench on the run. "Go in there and tell Donnie not to trap. Tell him to start working out wide again." He had waited too long. The teams were already facing each other almost squarely at mid-field. The stands were as silent as twenty thousand people could ever be.

Paul watched in mounting disgust as the play began — a trapper again. Ernie spun, faked to Donnie, and lunged for the line. He was buried under an avalanche of tacklers, and the Bryan stands gave a dull, perfunctory cheer.

Paul, like everyone else, was several seconds realizing that Ernie no longer had the ball. He had taught them the play — a four-five-eight — and drilled them at it until he could follow its counts and contacts in total darkness. And yet it fooled him because, like everyone else, he had been lulled by the dull pattern of action.

Donnie, trailing away, had continued wide at a leisurely gait, looking back over his shoulder as though watching Ernie's progress. Then suddenly he brought the ball off his hip and broke down the unguarded sideline. For twenty yards he ran unchallenged, and when Bryan defenders got back into contention beyond the thirty-yard line Donnie was too rough to handle. He eluded a man, stiff-armed another, and as the safety offered a final threat Donnie simply threw a shoulder into him and blasted him aside. It was done so quickly that Coulton fans were still surging to their feet when the referee raised his arms.

In the ensuing uproar, Mr. Jim came out to the sideline, laid a

hand on Paul's shoulder and shook him gruffly. "Go on," he chided, "find something wrong with that one. I dare you."

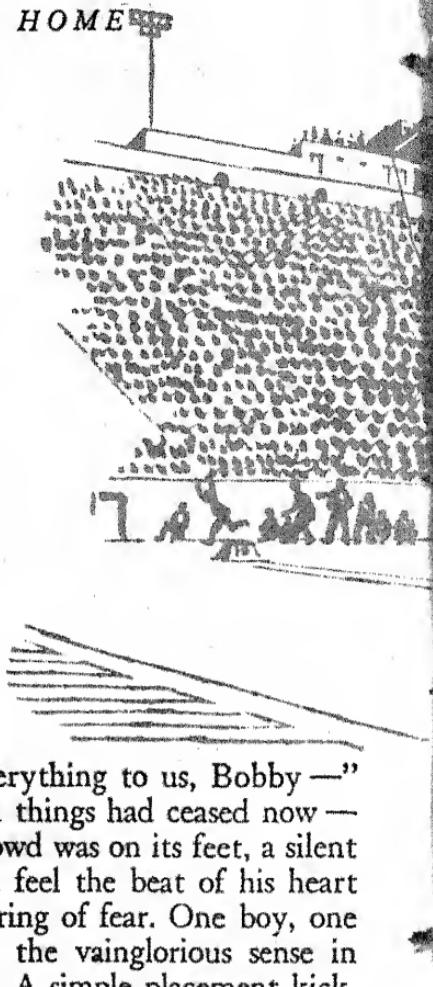
On field the ball had been placed for the point try, and the Coulton players were milling uncertainly and looking toward Paul. They needed a kicker. They had never needed one more desperately. Paul turned to the bench. Bobby was on his feet, bending and flexing his knee. Seeing Paul watching, Bobby limped quickly to the sideline.

"Bobby—" There wasn't anything to say, actually. Bobby was the only point kicker he had. He was a better risk even with a lame knee than any attempt to shove the ball across. "If you don't think you can do it — if the knee's too sore — this point means everything to us, Bobby —"

The boy was already on his way. All things had ceased now — all movement, all noise. The packed crowd was on its feet, a silent mass of humanity, watching. He could feel the beat of his heart and, deep inside, a faint, tic-like flickering of fear. One boy, one moment — it didn't matter except in the vainglorious sense in which football was supposed to matter. A simple placement kick, good or bad — it would be forgotten tomorrow. And yet, good or bad, some part of it would be remembered forever by Bobby, his teammates and the crowd.

The suspense was endless. Now the huddle, now the line-up, now the rumble that became a gradual din of partisan hysteria. The ball was back and Donnie was placing it, and at last it was spinning high in the bright air above the goal, hanging there, endlessly suspended, before the referee finally raised his arms.

Coulton 14, Bryan 13. They had a chance now. Not much of a chance, certainly, with a one-point lead. Bryan would pound and





pound. In the final reckoning it might depend on something so unforeseeable as a mistimed block or a dropped pass. No one could say arbitrarily that any game was won or lost at this stage. Yet the pressure definitely had shifted, and in the minutes that unfolded now he saw the makings of a miracle.

Coulton became a fighting team fighting for its life. As the minutes dragged and the pressure mounted, one Bryan attack after another fell short of the goal. When Coulton had the ball, Donnie took no chances. Using the simplest, safest plays — Ernie in the line, Robin on wing-arounds, himself on slants and sweeps — he would tick off a first down, perhaps two. Then Robin would stand back and loft a punt high and far, making Bryan trade more precious minutes for the yards it had to have.

Late in the final period, Bryan went to the air, completing four straight passes. Coulton dug in desperately, stopped the drive deep in the danger zone and took control of the ball. Paul gazed anxiously at the clock. Two minutes left. Three long, slow, sweeping,

time-consuming plays. Donnie was counting, seven, eight, nine, and the snap was back, leading him to the right, and he had his hands on the ball — only he wasn't controlling it.

He juggled it frantically, had it, then lost it. Players spilled around him, scrambling for the loose ball, and Donnie stood like a spectator in their midst as if unaware of what was happening. Paul couldn't believe it. Donnie was standing there, frozen with fear, staring up at the howling stands.

The referee blew his whistle, planted a foot on the ball and motioned northward, and jubilant Bryan players raced into a huddle. Still Donnie stood staring into the crowd. Bryan was breaking from the huddle before Ernie Gillis rushed over, shook him violently and pointed to the vacant halfback post. Donnie stumbled off to his position. Paul looked once more at the clock. "Ninety seconds, eighteen yards," he thought. "It's a simple business of arithmetic. That's all football is — arithmetic."

He watched the Bryan fullback slam four yards through the line, then six. Then he watched a Bryan halfback take a pitchout at full speed and slither across the goal line. The clock showed ten seconds.

"You see that," he said to Mr. Jim. "That's something to remember. With time running out, it's smart to go wide because the defense never expects you will."

Mr. Jim looked at him but he did not answer. His lips were trembling, and tears were streaming down his cheeks.

WHEN Paul reached the dressing room, the place was a madhouse. No one had bothered to close the door, and the room was jammed with spectators. Players were standing numbly in the uproar with the stunned, glassy look of battle casualties, and the mob was shouting and pushing.

Paul set to work clearing the room. The bulk of the crowd was Coulton fans and many of these were parents. They wanted to talk and sympathize, and he had to be gentle with them even while being firm. Finally he went to the door with the last group and stood with his hand on the knob, smiling and nodding, until they were gone. Then he closed and locked the door.

A few of the players began undressing. At the far end of the

room Donnie was seated on a bench with his face buried in his hands. He wasn't crying. He was sitting there hiding behind his hands, too old to yield to grief, too humiliated to lift his head. Mr. Jim was beside him, looking as if he had been there for some time.

Seeing Paul, Mr. Jim got up and threaded his way across the room. "He'll snap out of it in a minute," he said. "He's taking it pretty hard — keeps saying he lost the game. You'd think he was the first kid who ever fumbled. Maybe it would help if you tried to talk to him about it."

Paul shook his head. "I'm no good at that sort of thing. I'd just make him feel worse."

"Then talk to the whole team." Mr. Jim looked at him imploringly. "You're their coach. Don't let them sit here grieving. Tell them you're proud of them, or something. How can you stand there looking angry and disappointed after they've played their hearts out?"

"I don't know," Paul said. "I don't feel angry or disappointed."

"Don't you feel —" the old man's eyes overflowed and his voice broke "— no, you don't feel anything, do you? That's why you're a good coach. Coaches are like doctors. They don't cry when they lose a patient." He smiled faintly and shook his head. "I'm sorry, Paul. I'm not being critical. You're hard as nails, and I admire you for it. That's what it takes." Then he turned and walked away.

Paul climbed on a bench and rapped his knuckles against a locker door. The players lifted their heads and looked at him. Donnie's head came up and their eyes met. He rose and joined the others. When he stopped beside Ernie, the big fullback reached out and jabbed at him weakly in a gesture of sympathy and friendship.

"Well, boys," Paul began. He had no idea what to say. Post-



mortems were strictly out of his line. "Well, the show's over and it's a long ride home, isn't it? When we started the season four months ago, did any of us think we'd get this far?"

A few of them grinned and shook their heads.

"Four months ago," Paul went on, "I wouldn't have given you a fifty-fifty chance of winning a game. I still don't know why you started winning. Coaching didn't do it, because I never saw a team that could do as much fumbling and stumbling as you've done."

For a fearful instant he felt he had said the wrong thing. He glanced at Donnie, but the boy was grinning as a ripple of laughter passed over the room.

"Today," he said, "you came within an ace of beating the best high-school team I've ever seen. I don't think anyone who saw you today will ever say that you could have done better than that. I know I won't." They had brightened. The pain was over. They were only boys, and football was only a game.

"Mr. Jim has been telling me all season that this team was different, and I've been denying it. Football teams are all alike, I argued. The good ones win and the bad ones lose. Football players are just so much weight and muscle, I told him. Well, I've changed my mind. You *were* different. You worked together and stood up for one another, you put the team above yourselves. That, I think, is the reason you won ball games. Coaches are supposed to teach their players, but sometimes it works the other way. For me, personally, this was the proudest day of my life. I'll never forget my Coulton Cowboys."

As PLAYERS began filing out to the waiting bus, Paul left the dressing room and went up the dark ramp into the grandstand. One small chore remained for him. Grace would want a souvenir for her bulletin board. Discarded programs were strewn among the empty rows, and he picked up one of them and folded it into his pocket. Twilight had enclosed the playing field, and a night wind, sharp and raw, was fluttering the goal streamers. It was hard to believe that an hour ago twenty thousand people had stood here with an issue vital to all of them still in doubt.

He heard footsteps behind him and recognized their peculiar

limping tread. Turning, he watched Woffie emerge into the fading light. "Hi, Coach." It was a solemn and sympathetic greeting.

"Well," Paul said, "what did you think of it?"

Woffie broke immediately into a crisp, parrotlike commentary. "It was a fast-moving battle between two high-geared schoolboy elevens that — that had just about everything you could ask for in the way of a gridiron contest." His face was dead serious.

Paul struggled to keep back a smile. "Yes, sir," he agreed solemnly, "it was some football game."

Across the field a light was still burning in the press box, and he saw that Woffie had his eyes fixed upon it with the rapture of a mountaineer gazing at a distant peak.

"How'd it go up there? Did you keep all the numbers straight?"

"Oh, sure," Woffie said casually. "There's nothing to it."

"More fun than repairing bicycles," Paul offered.

"I'll say it is." Woffie drew up his shoulders in the wind. They heard the bus horn and started toward the ramp.

"The thing I've got to do," Woffie said in a firm, decisive voice, "is learn everything I can about sports. I've got to memorize the rule books and know all the plays and positions. When something special happens in a game, I've got to know just like that —" he flipped his fingers "— how to describe it."

"That's right," Paul said. "Spotting's a pretty important job."

"Nah, that's kid stuff," Woffie assured him. "I'm talking about when I get to be a sports announcer."

"I see," Paul said. Strangely, he wasn't amused. He was pleased and impressed that the boy's aim had been lifted high, at least for a day, and that he was confiding it with brash self-confidence. "In that case, you'd better stay in school," he reminded. "I've never heard of a sports announcer who didn't finish school."

He walked with Woffie to the bus, and the boy hurried to get aboard. With the pressure off, the players normally were boisterous after a game, but tonight they were silent until the bus was pulling away. At that moment Robin Mitchell leaped to his feet and began struggling with a window. He forced it up, thrust out his head and shoulders, and shook his fist at the stadium. "Wait till next year!" he yelled defiantly. "Just wait till next year!"

The others responded instantly. Windows opened, heads popped out, and the bus lurched away with the whole team echoing him in chorus.

IN THE Mexican quarter there was a quaint restaurant where the team had eaten before on its way home from games. When they arrived this evening they found a long table festively arranged. Behind the table stood the fat little proprietor and two of his waitresses, beaming, and as the players swarmed into the room customers looked toward them and burst into applause.

They had almost finished dinner when Milton Forrest arrived. The look of urgency on his face was unmistakable. Paul got to his feet quickly, swept with fear as he thought of Grace and of the fact that he was never near her, never of any help. He could feel his heart pounding as Forrest beckoned to him, then turned and went out the door.

Outside, he took Paul's arm. "Paul, there's been a bad automobile accident," he said. "I was wondering if word had reached here but I see it hasn't. Robin's still in there."

"Robin?" Paul scowled, determined not to believe what the word implied. "Robin's dad?" he asked.

Forrest nodded. "Mitch drove like a maniac. For years every mile has been his last. Well, he overshot the approach to that bridge across the Chaparral River and went through the rail."

"How bad —"

"Dead, Paul. I saw the car when the wrecker brought it into Coulton. You could hardly tell what it was."

"When did it happen?" Paul asked. "Going home?"

"No, coming — on the way to the game."

Paul was shaken almost to tears. At the time of death it must have made a great deal of difference to Mitch Mitchell that he was dying at one o'clock on his way to the game rather than at six o'clock on his way home, but it made no difference now. He had wanted more than anything else to see his son score a touchdown, but nothing mattered any more for Mitch.

"This makes Robin an orphan, doesn't it?" Paul said.

"Oh, no. His mother's living —" Forrest paused, then added

lamely "— somewhere — I think. Anyhow, he has relatives in Dallas."

Paul glanced at him. "Good God, Milt," he said helplessly, "how do you go about telling him a thing like that?"

Forrest looked sick and miserable. "I'll tell him, Paul. It's really my job anyway." He started resolutely toward the restaurant.

"Wait a minute, Milt," Paul called. "It's my job. I can't shove it off on you. People have been running interference for me all season. You, Mr. Jim, Bobby, my wife —" Paul waved his hand "— Mitch Mitchell, among others. I always fall back on one of you in a crisis. In my own way I'm as childish as R. V. Reagan."

Forrest looked puzzled. "Maybe we ought to tell him together," he said.

"No," Paul said firmly. "Go tell Robin to come outside. Then round up the team and get it started home. Robin can ride with me."

HE HAD expected the boy to be wild with grief. But Robin accepted the news with remarkable restraint. He was stunned only for a moment. Then he wanted to know the details. Where had it happened? Yes, he knew the bridge. His dad drove too fast. He had warned him time after time that he was going to kill himself one of these days. When had it happened?

Paul hesitated, wishing he could lie. "About one o'clock, I think."

"Then he didn't see the game, did he?"

Paul shook his head. The boy's eyes filled.

"Go on and cry, Robin," Paul said gently. "It's easier that way."

"I can't. I — I guess I'm too hurt to cry."

For a while they did not talk. Paul concentrated on driving, and Robin sat slumped in the seat gazing blankly out the window. Not once during the ride to Coulton did they mention Mitch again. They talked about football — the team, the game, next year's season — as if this were the only important thing in the world.

Robin began asking Paul about his background. Hadn't he played football for Texas Christian? When had he first decided he wanted to be a coach? And how did you get to be a coach anyway? Did you go to a regular school for it, like engineering?

"I'm from a place called Morgan's Gap," Paul said. "Population two thousand. It was the biggest place in the world when I was growing up."

"Did you know what you wanted to be then?" Robin asked. "Even when you were growing up?"

"Oh, sure. Football coach. Where else is there?"

"I'm going off to college," Robin said with deep sincerity, "and then I'm coming back to Coulton and be a football coach."

Paul did not reply for a long moment. "That's almost exactly what I was going to do at your age," he said. "Go back to Morgan's Gap and be coach of the home-town team."

Robin looked at him, puzzled. "But you could have. You could have been the best coach they ever had. Why didn't you?"

"I don't know," Paul said. "It turned out to be too small a place, I suppose."

ON THE outskirts of Coulton, Paul wondered what he should do with Robin. All manner of saddening details must be awaiting him. Meanwhile, Robin had to sleep and eat and be cared for.

All of it could wait until tomorrow, he decided. He would take Robin home with him. Then he remembered that Helen had spent the afternoon with Grace. He wondered if she were still there and if she had heard about Mitch's death.

As they turned into the drive, the front door opened and he saw Grace standing in the light. The look on her face told him that she and Helen had heard and that Helen was probably gone. When she saw Robin she glanced meaningfully at Paul and he nodded to her. She understood from his manner that Robin was not to be sympathized with. As soon as they were in the house, she told them that Mitch's mother and sisters were on their way to Coulton.

Robin looked exhausted. "Do you think you could sleep?" Paul asked.

"I guess so."

While Grace was preparing the extra bed, Paul brought a pair of pajamas for the boy. After Robin was in bed, Paul and Grace sat in the living room talking about the event. "Did you know that Helen and Mitch were going to be married?" she asked.

He nodded. "Mitch told me the other night."

"She's a wonderful woman, Paul. I'd have gone all to pieces, but she didn't cry. She just kept shaking her head and saying, 'Poor Mitch,' over and over. Mitch had given her a ring, which she wasn't wearing because of her job. But when she found out that he was dead, she took the ring out of her purse and put it on. And later, when she called Mitch's mother and other people about it, she told them that they were engaged."

After a while, they went quietly to the bedroom door and listened. Hearing no sound, they eased into the room and found Robin deep in sleep. Grace drew the covers over his shoulders. "He's a handsome boy," she whispered. "So small, and so very brave." Tears rimmed her eyes, and she bent quickly and touched her lips to his cheek.

In the kitchen they put on the coffeepot. Waiting for it to perk, they heard the courthouse clock striking midnight. Grace's face brightened. "The game, Paul," she said. "I'd almost forgotten to tell you. It was a magnificent game. I'm so sorry we got beat."

He drew her down into his lap. "We didn't get beat, honey," he said, kissing her. "As Mr. Jim says, we got outscored." He found the program in his pocket and handed it to her. "Here. Souvenir."

She leafed through it until she came to the score block. "Do you have your fountain pen?" She took it and filled in the score. "There. Now it's over. Bryan 20, Coulton 14. I should cry a little, I suppose, only I don't feel like it."

"I know," he said. "Once it's finished it isn't nearly as important as you thought it was."

She went to the stove to adjust the flame under the coffee.

"Grace —" He stood up and crammed his hands in his pockets, not looking at her. "I don't know if this is the right time to say it. The other night I told you that the worst thing a coach could do was go soft on a town. And I know I'm right about that. I've seen too many coaches find a home for themselves, then get run out of town the first bad season." He looked at her. "I also know that Barrington is the biggest opportunity I'll have for a long time to come."

"But you'd rather stay in Coulton."